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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 580. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 10TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 580.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending February 10th, 1900.

THE IRON OF REMORSE.

It is never well to be too sure what you would do under given circumstances, until you have tried and found out. A course of action which you know to be absolutely foreign to every instinct within you—when you sit down to reason about it, after the manner of the age—may be the very one you will follow when there is no time for reason. If any one had told Mackworth that under fire he would be a coward, Mackworth would have knocked the informant down then and there, and have reflected upon the danger to his commission afterwards.

Mackworth had passed though his course with credit and took a commission in the Canadian Mounted Police.

Excepted after the manner of cadets—which is not to be taken seriously—Mackworth had not let women enter into his scheme of existence. His ideals were of another sort just then. He was young and full of belief and things, and he thought that the way to win approval of his superiors and the gratitude of his country, was to avoid wirepulling and to kill the enemies of his Queen.

Therefore, he rejoiced greatly when, after only six weeks of his thoroughly undesirable garrison, he was ordered out in the field to suppress a rebellious tribe of Indians under their chief, Chatta. He had had his kit all rolled in a rubber poncho, and his mess chest pretty well stocked for the whole of the six weeks. He believed that a soldier should be always in readiness. He believed so many things then—though before long the bottom fell out of his universe, and he was filled with an enduring scepticism. And this was how it came about:

The first time he was under fire was when they were caught at rather a disadvantage by the Indians in a difficult pass. The fight began about dusk and lasted well into the night. It may have been the result of some bugaboo stories of his babyhood, which had fostered an unconquerable fear of the dark; it may have been some lurking instinct, or it may have been just blue funk which overcame him. Whatever it was, he hid behind a boulder, crouched and cowered there, trembling so that his revolver fell from his hands.

And Morley, his captain, found him so.

"What are you doing?" he demanded. He was an Irishman and a soldier of the old school, but he did not swear.

Mackworth knew, from that, how bad it was. He scrambled up and babbled.

"Get out of there!" the captain said. He would have used a better tone to one of the troop curs.

Mackworth felt for his revolver and got out, staggering, but no longer afraid, only ashamed—sickeningly ashamed—beyond all endurance.

He tried hard to get himself killed after that. He walked up and down in front of his men, giving orders and smoking cigarettes, and doing his best to serve as a target.

The captain watched him and began to understand. His frown relaxed.

"You'd better get under cover," he suggested; "you are taking needless risks."

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Mackworth looked at him with wide, blank eyes, and did not answer. His face was not only white now: it was grey and set, like the face of a corpse.

Morley's heart softened.

"It's only a baby, anyway," he said to himself, "and it is unhappy out of all proportion." And presently he went to him again. "Will you get under cover, Mackworth?" he insisted.

"No," said the lieutenant, "I won't."

The captain did not mince his words now, and spoke fiercely:

"I order you back under cover, sir!"

Mackworth glanced at him and went on smoking. Morley did not fancy his own position, arguing with a green boy, fully exposed to an invisible enemy. He knew that wasting officers is pretty, but it is not war.

"I shall order you to the rear, under arrest, unless you get back there with the men immediately!"

Mackworth retired, with a look at his superior officer for which he should have been court-martialled. After that, the work of the Police became a chase after the intangible, up mountain slopes, when you pulled your horse after you; down them, when he slid atop of you.

Chatta's band was at the north, to the south, to the east and west; but when the troops got to the spot, after forced marching, all signs of them had disappeared.

It went on for two months, and all the while Mackworth's despondency grew. The weight of years was upon his yet barely squared shoulders, the troubles of a lifetime were written upon his face. And it was a pitiably young face, despit the growth of yellow beard. He would not be comforted. He was silent and morose. He would not lift up his beautiful baritone in song, be the camp ever so dull. Only his captain knew why, of course — and he didn't tell. Neither did he attempt consolation. He thought the remorse healthful, and he knew, besides, that in such cases a man has to work out his own conclusions and salvation. This is the way Mackworth eventually tried to work out his:

There came one day a runner from the hostiles—a dish-faced, straight-locked creature of sinews—who spoke through the White Mountain interpreter of the Police, and said that his chief was ready to go back to the reservation, but that he must go upon his own terms. And the chief stipulated, moreover, that one white man—one, alone and unguarded—should go to the hostile camp and discuss those terms. If a force attempted to come, he would retreat with his braves and the trouble would continue.

Morley made answer that none of his men had any intention whatever of walking into a death trap of the sort.

Then Mackworth spoke up. "I have," he said.

"Get out," said the captain incredulously.

"I mean what I say," said Mackworth, "and I shall consider your permission to go the greatest and the only favour you can do me. Something may be effected by it."

"Your death, that's all; and a little preliminary torture."

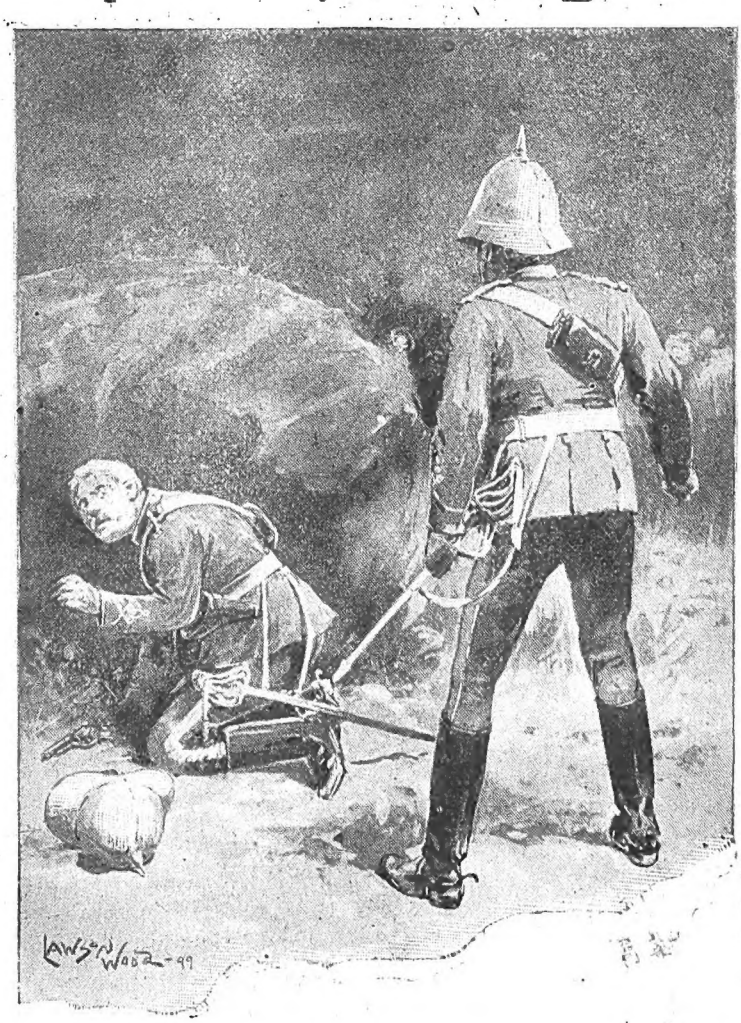
The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders. "Shall you let me go?" he insisted.

"Not by a long sight."

"I wish to go, Captain Morley."

Morley considered, and he decided that it might not be wise to refuse. There was no knowing just what the set-faced boy might do. So they parleyed together for a time, then Mackworth mounted his horse and went. He did not expect to come back, and the officers and men did not expect to see him again. They watched him go off into the distance of the plain, toward the mountains, following his guide, who swung on at the long, untiring dog trot.

After four hours they came to the mouth of a narrow canyon. The runner had given no sign or sound, and the fixed look had not gone from



He hid behind a boulder, crouched and cowered there, trembling so that his revolver fell from his hands.

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Mackworth's face. Well within the canyon the hostiles were in camp. They had hobbled their lean little ponies, the squaws were gathering wood, and the bucks were squatting upon the ground or playing monte with cards of painted hide around a cowskin spread under a cedar tree. Four of them rose and slouched forward. There was a prolonged scrutiny upon both sides.

The chief waited for Mackworth to begin; but the white man's instincts were good. He beat the sullenly silent redskin at his own game, and in the end the chief spoke. The guide displayed for the first time his understanding, and interpreted. Mackworth made answer with decision, stating his own terms. The bucks scowled, and the chief began to argue.

The white man, with the unflinching eyes, would not compromise. "Tell him," Mackworth said, "that this is my will. If he will not do this I go back to the soldiers, and we follow you and kill you all, man and woman." The face of the chief grew black, a growl rose from the crowding bucks, and the watching squaws began to chatter in voices sweet as the tinkle of glass bells.

The chief stepped suddenly forward and caught the bridle above the curb. Not so much as an eyelash of the stern, white young face quivered, and the heart of the red man was filled with admiration. One movement of fear would have cost Mackworth his life then; but he was not afraid, not though he know that torture might await him. He sat looking coolly down at the lowering, cruel faces. The chief turned and spoke to the bucks, and there was a growl of protest; the squaws joined with a shrill little chorus scream. But the chief flung away the bridle with a force which made the horse back.

"He do same you say. He go back to homes to-day. He say you ukishee quick," said the interpreter. Mackworth turned deliberately and "ukisheed" with no show of haste and without a backward look.

He reported his success and went to his tent. His look of stolid wretchedness was unchanged. Morley began to be nervous. He went to the tent himself and found the lieutenant writing a letter by lantern light. It was not a normal opportunity to take for that, so the captain, being filled with misgivings, trumped up an errand and sent him off on it.

He placed the barrel well in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

Then he looked at the letter. It was to Mackworth's mother. Morley did not read it, but he guessed the whole thing in a flash. He took up Mackworth's carbine and slid it under the tent flags into the outer darkness. Also he broke the Colt's, which had been thrown down upon the bedding, and put the cartridges in his pocket. Then he replaced it in the holster, and going out picked up the carbine and hid it in the brush.

After the camp was all asleep and Morley snoring loudly across the tent, Mackworth groped under his pillow and brought out the revolver. He cocked it and waited a moment; then he placed the barrel well in his mouth and pulled the trigger once—and then again and again.

* * *

At first call for reveille Morley awoke. Mackworth was already up, and turning he studied his captain's face with the faintest and most unwilling of smiles twitching the corners of his mouth. It was the most natural look his face had worn in weeks.

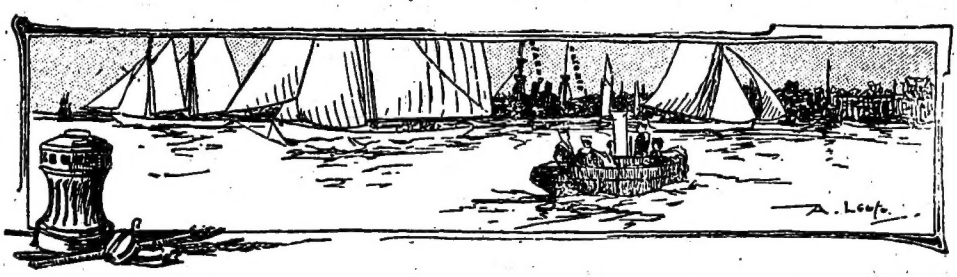
"Well?" said Morley.

"Well," answered Mackworth, "I should like my carbine and the cartridges of my revolver, please."

Morley's face broke into a broad grin. "Will you be good if I let you have them?" he asked.

"I'll be good," promised the lieutenant.

F. C. STUTT.



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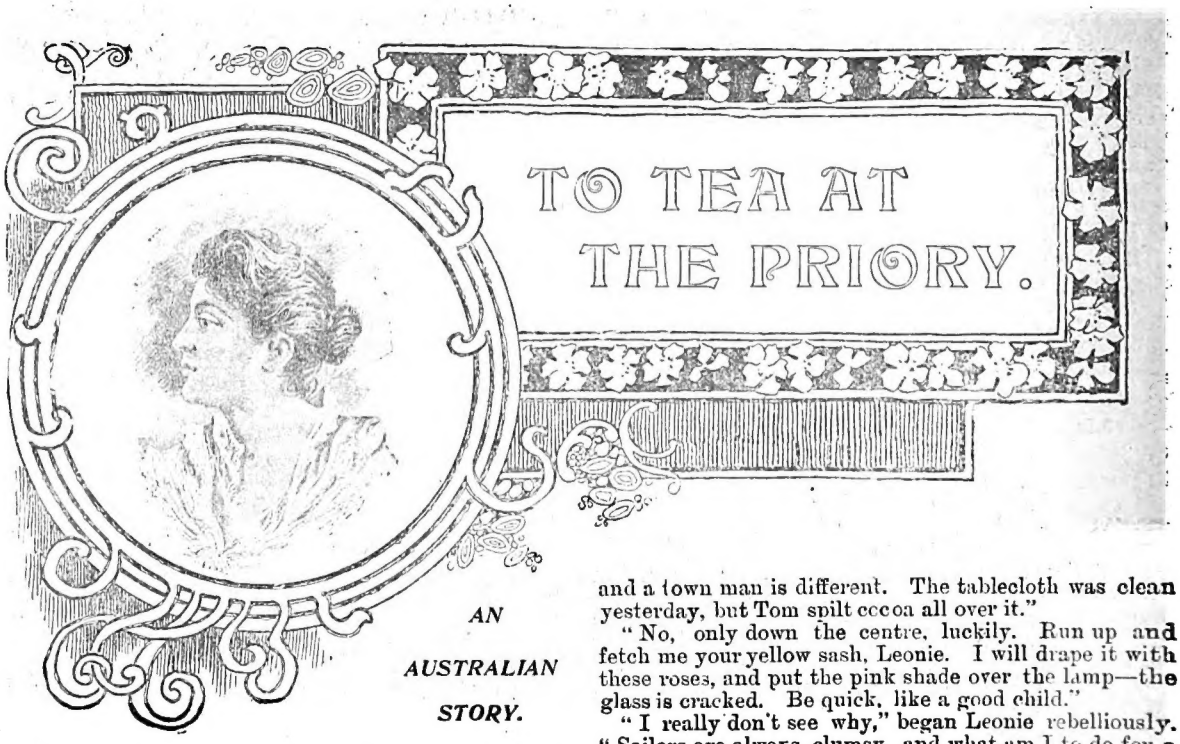

AN AUSTRALIAN STORY.

"GIRLS," said Lance, "you had better fly round like two-year olds. I've asked Lieutenant Feveral to tea."

"To tea," screamed Leonie, tossing back her mane of red-brown hair. "There isn't a clean dinner-napkin in the house. You know to-morrow is washing day."

"Well, it is Barbara's fault, not mine. The fellow met her in Sydney, and must be dead nuts on her, for he played billiards with me at Cray's to-day, and just let me win. Then he fished so that I had to ask him to the Priory. Where is Barbara?"

"Out; giving a music-lesson in the town. What on earth is the man doing in Waveny?"

"He has been staying at Werrimu with the Hills, on a short holiday to see bush life, and reckoned his nearest way home was by Waveny—as if Hendra wasn't quite fifty miles nearer. He must take the train to-morrow, so can't drop in to any more meals. Just 'buck in,' like a good girl, and give us something decent."

"Barbara says they cook so beautifully on the gunboat," said Leonie. "He will expect everything so nice."

"Oh, here is Gracie," as the elder Miss Wycherley strolled in from the garden, carrying a dilapidated basket full of pink and yellow roses. Her face fell when Lance repeated his news.

"There's absolutely nothing for tea," she said. "The twins finished the stewed peaches when they came back from school, and we have only six decent small knives. Of course the small fry can dine in the kitchen, and mother is spending the day at the Cedars. Lance, Tom, Leonie, Barbara, self, and the man. Yes, the six knives will just do. What a dreadful nuisance Barbara's admirers are becoming."

"But none so bad as this one," sighed Leonie, who, though still in her early "teens," seemed the most responsible person in the happy-go-lucky family.

"I don't mind the ones from the stations, but a sailor and a town man is different. The tablecloth was clean yesterday, but Tom spilt cocoa all over it."

"No, only down the centre, luckily. Run up and fetch me your yellow sash, Leonie. I will drape it with these roses, and put the pink shade over the lamp—the glass is cracked. Be quick, like a good child."

"I really don't see why," began Leonie rebelliously. "Sailors are always clumsy, and what am I to do for a sash when I wear my white frock on Sunday, if he spills his tea, or anything?"

"Rubbish. He is sure to be careful. Run quickly, it is nearly six now. Go to the gate, Lance, and wait for him, and take him to see the grape vines; there is so little for tea, and he might be tempted to eat some grapes."

Lance strolled away down the grass-grown drive, and Leonie returned with the sash, which Grace draped artistically. In old days, when the Wycherleys, of Reedy Creek, where a power in the land, Gracie had always arranged the table centres. She thought of those palmy days, and sighed a little as she put on the silver knife-rests and the spoons, where the Wycherley lion was still rampant.

It was all the plate they had left from the wreck and did not match very well with the common-looking knives and stone china. Still when the tall lamp threw a rosy glow through its pink shade on the soft yellow silk, and the shell-tinted La France roses nestling lovingly against their amber cloth of gold sisters, Gracie decided that "even Barbara would be satisfied."

Leonie was the only really tidy one in an untidy family, and so was foredoomed to the usual fate. If scissors were wanted, "Oh, look in Leonie's basket." A clean handkerchief. "In Leonie's left-hand drawer," and so on. But Leonie continued to keep thimble, scissors, etc. in her work-basket, and ironed up her stock of handkerchiefs every Monday morning, after gathering them from the uttermost parts of the earth, viz., from garden seats or skirt pockets, or (favourite haunt of all) the flat-iron shelf in the laundry, resting in oblivion after doing duty as ironholders!

"Where are the bellows?" cried Grace. "Tom, do put down that book, and look for them. You horrid boy, to use all the small wood making bullets—the kettle will never boil."

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Leonie looked hopelessly round. "The bellows are always lost," she said. "So are the hot-water jugs, and the toasting-fork. As long as I live, I shall believe that kitchen things have souls, and minds, and characters. Look at the kerosene holder; put it where you like, it always gets into passages, and loves being knocked over. As for the toasting fork, it positively hides."

Her remarks woke dreaming Tom to reflection. "Awfully true what you say, 'spring chicken,'" he said. "Now, there's the little boiler, it has a down on everyone. The spiteful way it sticks out from under the table, and barks one's shins, proves that. As for the teapot, clean it out as often as you like, when you want it, it is always full of tea-leaves. They are a lot of bad characters, anyway."

"Oh! no, not at all," said Leonie. "Just look at the hearth-brush; we use it for everything—cleaning out ashes, dusting furniture, hunting cobwebs, and yet it is always just handy when it is wanted."

"For goodness' sake, stop chattering," said Grace; her fair face crimson from stooping over the refractory fire. "The man is in the garden now, and Lance is talking to him. Remember, Tom, you are not to take butter at tea. I gave quite half a cupful to a tramp this morning, and Barbara is sure to forget to bring in more."

"More fool you," said Tom. "Here are the bellows, sneaking into the flour-bin. I'll give the fire a blow for you."

Leonie flew hither and thither, "tracking the tea-cups," and returned triumphantly at last to wash them up. One contained a tadpole, belonging to the twins; another—unearthed from Lance's room—was half-full of shaving soap; and a third held a dark and deadly mixture of rose leaves and salt, owned by the twins, and called "Attar of roses." but Leonie impartially emptied all treasures into the waste-bucket.

"Such a house I never did see," cried Grace. "Oh! bother, there, that horrid little boiler has gone and rubbed itself all over my clean frock; hateful thing."

"You should wear an apron," sighed Leonie. "I've always told you so."

"An apron. As if I ever had a moment's time to put an apron on."

"You are too big, and this kitchen is too small," said Tom. "No fellow would marry you, Gracie, unless he was a millionaire. Six-foot girls are luxuries, and men nowadays can't afford luxuries. Give me a neat little nugget for genuine hard work!"

Grace, whose stature and build were those of a tall Greek goddess, took no notice of this brotherly remark, but ran over to a silver-backed hand-glass that hung behind the kitchen door, and patted her smooth flaxen hair with her shapely, white hands.

"I think I'll do," she said. "Lance will be cross if he is left too long. Help the 'spring chicken,' all you can, Tom, and be sure not to let the twins get at the buttered toast. Oh! and you might fish Browning out of the bread-crock; it fell in this morning when I was shelling peas. It's Barbara's blue and gold copy, so you had better put it back in her room for me;" with which parting injunction Miss Wycherley left the kitchen and went out into the garden to talk to her sister's friend.

"I suppose he has come to ask Barbara to marry him," said Tom. "Gracie ought to marry first, being the eldest. She's more reliable, too. One never knows what bee is humming in Bab's bonnet."

"You mean that Barbara might say 'No,'" said Leonie. "I don't think so. If she likes him at all, she will take him. You see Barbara hates poverty and muddle and trouble. It would be such a good thing. We must keep the twins away this evening and give him a chance to propose."

"You've got a good head on you," said Tom, admiringly, "though you are no beauty," gazing critically at his sister's many angles and sharp, anxious little face.

"Neither are you, for the matter of that," said the owner of the "good head," busily buttering toast. "We are the plain ones in a good-looking family, though you will grow a moustache, some day that will cover your awful mouth."

Tom glanced at the looking-glass. "It's a generous mouth, anyway," he said. "None of your mean little button-holes. I'm your man if you want the stupid, handsome ones kept out of the way. You must fix Grace up. She is just the sort to think she is entertaining when she is playing third. I can manage the twins."

And so the two arch-plotters combined to take the threads of two lives from the hands of Fate into their own.

Ralph Feveral was a clean-shaven, sturdy, blue-eyed sailor. He had met Barbara when she was on a visit to relatives in Sydney when his ship was stationed there. He was navigating lieutenant on *H. M. S. Blackadder*, but, unlike the usual run of naval officers, was exceptionally well endowed with the good things of this world, being a younger son with a fortune of his own and a love of the sea for its own sake, which alone kept him chained to the service.

He might have married more than one of the many girls who fluttered, butterfly-like, through Sydney society, but Barbara's strange individuality had left a lasting impression, and Ralph had obtained leave and accepted the Hill's invite, chiefly because Werrimu Station was in the Waveny district, for he had heard of the downfall of Reedy Creek, and that the family with their fallen fortunes, had settled in the mountain town.

The old house, in its romantic garden, seemed a fit setting for Barbara's unusual and half-mysterious beauty. The luxuriant creepers and climbing roses hid the ant-eaten, unpainted walls, just as the good looks and unfailing good spirits of its inmates created a glamour that hid the fact of the sordidness and discomfort of their poverty from all but themselves. And the lieutenant thought he had never seen a happier household, and he certainly enjoyed his tea, in spite of the fact that there were moths in the honey and that Leonie's hastily made scones were like so many bullets!

While he was washing his hands in Lance's bedroom a small boy with a shock of thick but white hair had entered with a clean towel. He lingered gazing at Feveral intently, and then had innocently asked his name.

"Mine is Tom Wycherley," he said. "What is your name?"

"Feveral—Ralph Feveral," said the sailor. Whereupon Tom had given a most dramatic start.

"Then it is your photo that Bab keeps in her room? I often wondered whose it was. My sister Barbara is not like other girls, you know—does not care about photos, at all—lets 'em lie about anywhere. So it's yours, is it?"

With which statement Master Tom had made a rapid exit, leaving Feveral to the pleasing fancy that his photo

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alone, was favoured by a place in Barbara's bedroom, and the thought created a chain of others.

As a matter of fact, it was there with half a score of photos, tucked away in a forgotten drawer and hidden by faded ribbons and crushed flowers, old programmes, and other mementoes of her Sydney days.

One of her cousins had slipped it into her box when she was going, "for a joke," she said because Barbara had not any particular delight in Feveral's attentions; but of course the lieutenant could not know this, therefore Tom's timely information decided a half-formed plan in his mind. He had not meant to propose to the girl this time, fearing to hurry matters, for it had not seemed to him that she returned his affection at all. He knew that she was going to Sydney again shortly, and that the *Blackadder* would still be in Port Jackson —time enough then—but if, after all, she did care for him, there was no time like the present, and he would try his fate to-night.

And when Barbara came in from her quick walk through the sharp mountain air, with the dusky hair ruffled by the night wind, and her olive cheeks aglow with the exercise, and seemed graciously pleased to see an old friend, the lieutenant made up his mind to act at once.

"Surely," he thought, "I will be able to get her alone for a moment or two in this vast old garden."

However, after tea the whole family, including several little girls and boys of various heights and ages, seemed inclined to congregate round Ralph on the veranda. Grace and Barbara decided not to wash up until the morning, and Lance was quite content to stay at home and listen to this traveller from strange countries, talking.

The rule in the Wycherley family was, "share and share alike," and Feveral was suffering the penalty of being amusing. Brian and Betty, the twins, who were of an uncomfortably demonstrative nature, clung especially close to him, and separated him entirely from the canvas chair in which Barbara was resting.

At last Lance dragged himself unwillingly away to go to The Cedars to bring his mother home, and then Tom whispered a mysterious message to the twins, which caused them to rush off kitchenwards like mad things, for the twins were always hungry, and Tom had promised to let them make toffee, reckless of the wrath to come in the morning when the only enamelled saucepan would be found full of burnt sugar.

Leonie hunted the other children to bed, and Feveral was left with the two girls, and Gracie seemed very happy, indeed, like the serene young goddess she was, swinging in the string hammock, and asking Ralph many questions, and she felt slightly annoyed when Leonie insisted upon her presence in the children's nursery to inspect an "awful rash," which had appeared on the baby's arm, and it was some time before she discovered that red ink had more to do with the disfigurement than anything else.

She went back to the veranda to enjoy some more of the lieutenant's conversation, and found that the birds had flown. In fact, Ralph had seized the opportunity, and taken Barbara off to show him how the lower garden looked by moonlight.

In after days Barbara never could remember all the words of her first proposal—only one sentence, "and as I love you so I cannot live without you. Will you marry me, Barbara?" And looking into the brave blue eyes, she knew that in very truth he did love her, and yet she said, "No, no, I cannot."

"Why, Barbara; why? Is it that you love someone else?"

"No, indeed; it is not that. I have never cared for anyone. I don't believe I can. I like you very much, indeed—better than anyone I know—but I do not love you."

"But the love will come in time," said the man, using the same false platitude, and believing it, as other men have done before him. "I won't hurry you in any way, sweetheart. You shall have as long as you like to get used to me, but if you do not care for anyone else I am not afraid that you will not love me; such love as mine must bring an answering affection."

"I would like to marry you," said the girl calmly. "You could give me the life I like—you could take me from all this misery and poverty, but is it fair to you—as far as I know myself I am not capable of caring for anyone more than I do for you (I always liked you in those Sydney days better than the other men I met), but is it possible that I do not know myself. I wish—oh, I wish you had waited before you asked this."

"But you are not going to refuse me, Barbara. I will not press you for an answer. I love you with my whole heart and soul, and I am willing to take the risk you speak of. It is only because this is all so unexpected that you feel like that. Say 'yes' my dear one."

His strong arms were around her, his strong will seemed to dominate hers, and there is no doubt that her inclinations were all in his favour, and so Barbara said:

"Yes!"

She liked and admired the man immensely, and she thoroughly believed that she was incapable of any stronger feeling for anyone. She had had many admirers, and had been brought up, as most bush girls are, in the society of men, and at the age of twenty she considered that it was impossible to love in the future, because she had not done so in the past.

Perhaps her nature was, after all, a cold one, and the latent fire in her blue-black Irish eyes meant nothing, and many happy marriages have been based on love and esteem, instead of love and love. These pages have only to do with tea at the Priory, and the consequences thereof; and the subsequent history of Ralph and Barbara are quite another story.

* * * * *

Tom crept to Leonie's window some hours later, and invited her to come out on the roof, which she immediately did, meeting him on the sloping shingles between the dormer windows.

"It's all right," whispered the boy. "He is coming to see mother in the morning, and I'm going to ask him to beg us off about the burnt saucepan."

"Of course it's all right," said Leonie. "Barbara's cheeks are red as can be, and she is in Grace's room, laughing and crying at the same time; girls always do that when they are engaged. Still" (with one of her anxious sighs), "I wish it was Gracie we had helped instead of Bab; none of us really know her."

"How could we," said the youth contemptuously, "when she does not know herself. Anyway, he is deep enough in love for anything."

"Poor man," said the gentle Leonie pityingly. "I should think he was. He took a scone every time you passed the dish, and never noticed that no one else did."

"Oh, that will be all right," said Tom hopefully. "When a fellow has got an attack of love as bad as that chap has even a ton of your scones couldn't hurt him."

Ethel Mills.

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THE BITE of the PICHU-GUATE.

CLEARLY Claudio was tired, and it took a good deal to tire this big, rough-headed young Mexican. But it was not to be wondered at after his morning's work. The lambs in his barn were now five days old, and at that age a New Mexican lamb is smart enough in body and impish enough in mind to upset the most patient-minded man.

Then the mothers, whose age might have been expected to give them discretion, were as crazy as the lambs. To add to the worry, the snakes were beginning to come out of their winter nap.

The opening of May at the 8,000 feet altitude of San Miguel is rather early for these long sleepers; but the spring was unusually warm, and though none had been seen, yet there was no doubting their presence. The hungry sheep were wild for the tender blades of grass that began to show about the mouths of the prairie dog's burrows, and nowhere else.

But in some burrows were other tenants than prairie dogs lying in the sunny mouths of the holes, and savagely resentful of interruption. Already that day Claudio had found three dead ewes, lying close beside a burrow, fearfully swollen, and upon the nose of each were two tiny black marks such as might be made with a tattooing needle.

Late in the afternoon the ewes, with a chorus of strange whistles, went tearing and galloping over the hillside and disappeared over the brow of the ridge, as if the very wolves were after them.

Claudio started in pursuit, but the lambs hung at his heels, in spite of a bombardment of words and pebbles that he directed at them, and whenever he paused they pranced up to him and snuggled against his legs, and dropped contentedly at his very feet.

Pulling off his coat, Claudio swung it vigorously about him to clear a space, leaped over the backs of a few loiterers, and went running up the slope at a pace it was a wonder to see.

The coat dropped from his hand as he jumped a gully, and as the lambs came stumbling along several tripped on it, and finding it warm promptly sprawled upon their knees and began to nurse at whatever rag or tag they first found. And the others, fancying that they were being robbed of their dinner, crowded and jostled about, butting, falling down, and clambering over one another.

Claudio might have laughed at the sight; but when he came back, fifteen minutes later, he saw about the coat only a lot of little white patches, smeared with blood. Here and there a lamb was to be seen, wandering disconsolately about or fallen exhausted over a shrub. And over the further hillside was just disappearing a big dark shambling figure with two white objects shining on it.

It was all plain enough. The ewes, scenting the bear from afar as he sneaked through the woods, had fled incontinently; for the actual presence of no other wild beast so terrifies sheep as the mere smell of a bear. And taking advantage of Claudio's brief absence, Bruin had sallied from the junipers, played havoc among the lambs (which were too stupid to fear even him), and was now making off with a couple "for future reference."

The bear, like bears always, was only anxious to get away if he decently could, and ran his best. Ordinarily that would have been far better than Claudio's best—or a very fair horse's best, for that matter. But greediness is costly, even for bears. The lamb in his mouth was no handicap whatever; and having eaten two or three besides, he might have been contented with that.

But the one he persisted in carrying hugged under his forearm did seriously impede him. Even then, in the long run, he was more than a match for his pursuer. When Claudio came in full view of him and only a hundred yards behind, he whipped from his belt the revolver he carried in lieu of a rifle.

"Throwing down" in the swift, instinctive motion of those who really know how to use a revolver, and never stop to ask whether it has sights or not, he sent a leaden proxy running for him. It was a good shot, tired and out of breath as he was, the kind of shooting one has to learn on the frontier, and cannot learn in a gallery.

The bear turned a complete somersault, and, gathering itself again, began biting viciously at its rump.

Claudio had not stopped at all; but now, when he was within thirty yards, he halted and watched the brute so as to give him a shot at a vital part. But at that very instant the bear, with a snuffle of rage, wheeled and came galloping at his late pursuer.

Claudio sent a square shot at the skull—not by any means under the impression that he could bore that sloping forehead, but hoping the rap might startle the beast into rising, so that he could get a chance at the

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throat, the best of all shots at a bear. But the heavy ball merely ploughed a red furrow up the skull, and the bear came lurching on. It was worse than useless to run. Slender as was the chance of life now, it all lay in standing firm as Claudio well knew.

When it was within six feet, the huge brute reared upon his haunches, and, springing back a step, Claudio was bringing back his weapon like lightning to "let go" when it should be on a level with that mighty throat, now fully exposed. But the bear was no innocent, and, cleverly judged as was Claudio's move, he had met his match in quick wit. Even the sweep of his swift arm was slow beside the flash of that great paw, as it swooped far forward, met his descending hand with a calculation an Indian eye might have envied, and sent the heavy revolver spinning forty feet, going off as it flew. And in another instant the shepherd was on his back, and the bear upon him.

The great claws had struck only the revolver, and Claudio's hand was unhurt, save where the violent wrenching of the trigger had cut and twisted his fingers; and instinctively he gripped deep in the thick fur where his hands first lighted. Neither had he been hurt by the fall, for here was soft grey sand—which a little relieved, too, the fearful pressure upon his legs. But none of these things comforted Claudio; and he fought only as a man fights blindly to the end. His last faint hope had gone when the revolver went whirling far beyond his reach.

The bear, which had gone to bed in his cave in the canyon of Acebache, rolling fat, in November, had but a few days ago come forth from that long nap, the shadow of his proper self. His long heavy fur was sadly rusty, and his huge frame lean as a rail. He had been interrupted in the first square meal he had enjoyed in five months, and from that long fast came two strange results.

One was, that he was not half himself in strength, and that the powerful young Mexican was, therefore, something more than a puppet in his paws.

Of the end, certainly, there could be no doubt; but meantime Claudio wrestled mightily, and even succeeded in struggling to his feet hugging close, to give those paws no chance for one of the swipes that would make an egg-shell of his head. His face he snuggled into the bear's chest, and so kept clear of the dripping jaws. And despite the fearful pressure under which his ribs creaked and swung, he hunched and tugged and swayed blindly and desperately, as if he were wrestling with some tall man whom he might hope to pitch at last. But it was not for long.

Finding these close quarters unsatisfactory, the bear brought up its muscular arm, and clapping its paw upon Claudio's mat of hair, forced his head resistlessly back. The great claws were buried in his scalp, and little streams of red spurted out. The bear's left arm was round his waist, while the right was giving him the "break hold" as scientifically as any wrestler could have done.

And now a villainous, warm breath came sickening in his face, and he could see the red jaws and white teeth within six inches. He even noticed, with that strange inconsequence which come upon one in these moments, that blood from the scalp wound had run down and tinged the froth which dripped from that great mouth.

In a frenzy of terror he made a clutch under the throat, to hold back that terrible head, and the strongest man could scarce have bent against Claudio's desperate arms; but the big jaws, working grimly, drew nearer. A deadly faintness began to spread over him, and Claudio shut his eyes.

Just then a sudden jerk ran through the body of the bear, and there was a sharp snort as of rage or pain. Claudio opened his eyes. He could see nothing but the demoniac face, but in it he fancied there was a new expression.

Then there was a sickening movement of the great claws which had sunk deep into his back and scalp. Surely they were relaxing!

Their withdrawal was far more painful than their entrance had been; but even with the faintness of the new pain, a sudden wave of joy swept through the shepherd—for the first time, now, he hoped, though he knew not why.

He shook his head savagely to clear the blood which streamed down over his eyes (the paw had dropped from his scalp), and dug his fists into the deep furred throat, and fought with the strength of two Claudios—fighting no longer like a dying rat fights, but like a man for hope of life.

Then a very wonderful thing befel. The bear was groaning and panting heavily; and suddenly it lurched and fell to the ground, carrying Claudio with it. But it was no longer trying to get his head between its jaws. For a moment it lay upon him, writhing and grinding its teeth, and then flung itself to one side biting up a great mouthful of sand.

Claudio leaped to his feet, ran to his revolver, and fell upon it, crying like a child. It was ten minutes before he could get up, for loss of blood—and, more than all, the frightful strain—had left him limp as a rag. At last he staggered to his feet, clutching the weapon, and walked unsteadily towards the bear.

Laying down his revolver he caught the heavy fur of

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the rump, to turn the bear over. Ordinarily he would have succeeded. Four hundredweight is no small lump, but Claudio, as you have seen, was an uncommonly powerful young man. Now, however, worn out with his fearful struggle, and with nerves so unstrung that he trembled all over, it was too much for him.

Still the mystery would not let him rest; and hunching his shoulder against the bear's back, he ran his hand under, feeling for the wound. He groped and groped, but suddenly in a hollow felt the touch of something very different from fur or sand, and in the same instant an inconceivable pang. And when he jerked his arm away a tiny snake less than a foot long, grey-backed and coppery on the stomach, was hanging from his thumb.

The last vestige of colour faded from the brown face and left it as grey as ashes between the drying streaks of blood—for Claudio knew the pichu-guate, the only real asp in the New World, the deadliest snake in North America.

So he had escaped the bear only to die by this tiny foe—for never yet had one been known to recover from the bite of the pichu-guate. A rattlesnake was nothing; but this, well, see what it had done for such a monster as the bear, and in the space of less than a minute!

Evidently, in their struggle, Bruin had stepped too close to this unsuspecting danger—that great lump on his hind leg explained all. Had he carried his usual coat of fat, the venom would have taken far longer to operate, and he would have had abundant time to settle accounts with Claudio. But he no longer looked gaunt He was still swelling—already he looked plump and fat, as if July with all its glory were here.

Claudio was reeling. Fearful pains shot up his arm and went forking through his body. Upon the thumb were only two black dots, right at the tip, but the hand in these five seconds had become double its size. If he could only cut it off! But alas! his knife was in his coat—and before he could get half-way to that he would be a dead shepherd.

All this had taken not so long as it has for you to read it—nay, scarce the time in which one might spell the longest word in it; for in these crises things and thoughts move swiftly, and one lives fast.

Claudio was still squeezing his thumb and crying aloud for a knife, when his eye lit on the revolver. Quick as a flash he sprang and caught it up and cocked it. There was just one cartridge left!

His nerves were steady now. He held his hand arm's-length before him, the wounded thumb erect, drew the revolver right back up to his eye, that the ball might not mangle too much, and thus stop the blood, which must flow; and with a hand as firm as if it had been carved of stone, pulled the trigger.

There was a dull, numb sensation, hardly a pain in all that side, and when the smoke cleared from his eyes, his right hand was black and bleeding. The thumb was gone clean at the lower joint.

There is one man in New Mexico who has been bitten by the pichu-guate and lives to tell of it—a tall, powerful, good-natured shepherd, with four grim grey furrows in his hair, and the thumb of the right hand missing. But Claudio seems rather proud of these disfigurements, and often says:

"Who talks of bargains? For so cheaply I bought my life twice in one hour."

A. Baldwin.

THE WAR HORSE.

When M. de Bossué returned to the court in France hewas most coldly received. The king refused to see him and the king's courtiers were quite uncivil. At his sweetheart's house, in the Rue des Saints Pères, the door was closed in his face. He was filled with astonishment and grief, both of which were increased when he went to see his friends. All looked askance at him, few deigned even to speak to him, and none accorded him the explanation he sought.

Too proud to question strangers, and yet sensitive enough to suffer keenly under the treatment he had received, he went to his room to brood alone.

There was a mirror here, and in this he surveyed himself. The hardships of war had deprived him of his good looks; his face was drawn and haggard, his skin wrinkled; his eyes were dull and sad; while across his left cheek a long, disfiguring scar told where a sabre had cut deep.

He left the mirror and sat down dejectedly. "I am grown ugly," he said, "and poor, and therefore they shun me." He thought of his life, offered to his country and to glory; of his hard campaigns in America and the Indies; of the famous battles in which he had done his part under Montcalm and Vaudreuil—"but all this," he told himself, "has been in vain. The king, my love, my friends, they are none of them left to me. The only faithful one of them all—my horse, who used to lick my hand and neigh gladly at my coming—he, too, is gone, for I have sold him. No one—nothing is left to me!"

One black thought was succeeded by another, and his gloom and melancholy increased till life seemed but a burden to be got rid of. He was a man of promptitude and decision, and, having come to this conclusion, he did not procrastinate. His pistol lay ready to his hand—one shot and the deed was done.

At court they said, "M. de Bossué had the fever." Weeks and months passed, and they spoke of him no more.

But there remained to Bossué an old-time friend. After serving in Spain for some ten years, and growing discontented with his work, M. le Comte de la Puysaye returned to France and to the court. He gained prestige at Mesdames de Boufless's, de Chauvelin's, de Surgere's, and Luxembourg; asked new service of the king, and solicited a regiment. He called himself a friend of Bossué's. "Poor fellow!" he said, "only thirty years old. What could have made him leave us in that way?"

His face clouded when he heard the story, for he was a brave man himself. "A coward!" he cried; "impossible!"

"But yes!" said his informer; "we repeat only what the reports said—reports which were sent to the king direct. M. de Bossué, it seems, disliked the enemy too greatly—so much so, in fact, that he could never bring himself to approach him."

"Bossué a coward!" cried the count; "he must have changed greatly, then. May not those reports have been false?"

"Well, the marshal himself——" and so on. La

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Puysaye heard the story repeated a score of times, and found that the mention of Bossué's name brought forth only curses or reproaches. He ended by renouncing him.

"But," he said to himself one day, "I can't forget him. I loved him well, and I believe I love him still. Very well, I shall allow myself this little eccentricity—that of loving a dishonoured wretch. Bossué remains my friend, and of all the world I alone shall recall him with something other than disdain."

He hung the dead man's portrait on his wall once more. But the portrait was an old one, and no longer resembled anybody. La Puysaye, discontented, wished for some other souvenir—something which Bossué had used. He thought of the horse: "Where is he now? They tell me that he sold him. That horse carried poor Bossué for ten years. I must find him."

Once, while his friend still served with him, he had seen the horse—a curious beast, of a dark-yellowish colour, the product of a cross between a Spanish barb and an Indian pony. He was able to furnish descriptions of the animal to certain men whom he sent in search of it.

The men were away three months.

One day, La Puysaye received notice that a horse answering to the description given had been found in a field in Artois.

He went to the place and bought the animal at once.

It was indeed, Bossué's extraordinary beast, the friend of his friend, old and thin, worn by the hard service before the plough and the ill-treatment of the farm-hands. There were the white legs, still fine as those of a racer, the long, black tail and mane, and those eyes, dark, cold, clear, and fixed, that made one uneasy. "Strange animal!" thought La Puysaye.

He had it fed, groomed, and saddled, and set out for Paris at a rather halting gallop. Much fatigued he arrived at length. But tired as he was, there was to be little rest for him. A note from the Bureau of War awaited him, informing him that his request for a regiment had been granted; that it was to be known as the "Grenadiers Puysaye;" and that he must join it near Fribourg as soon as possible. Taking hardly time for the writing of a letter and the saying of an adieu, he departed for that place; and, gratifying his own wish, he went there on Bossué's horse.

His new grenadiers grumbled among themselves. "Is it with that plug," they said, "that he means to lead us?"

La Puysaye's friends looked at the beast critically. An ensign lifted its lip. "No use," said the count, "he's an old horse, and his teeth no longer mark his age."

"But why didn't you come on your black fellow?"

"Oh, Constantine broke his leg, and—but do not laugh, messieurs; poor and old as is this charger, he is good enough for the campaign. I judged that we should be only amusing ourselves here, and I did not wish to honour the enemy by riding too fine a horse."

The officers saluted smilingly, and the colonel, wishing to see the marshal, M. de Coigny, inquired the way to his quarters. Before going thither, he left his horse with his orderly, who was going towards the trenches.

"Bring him back to me to-night," said the count, and the man departed with the horse.

But not more than an hour had passed, and La Puysaye was just leaving the marshal's quarters, when an attack was ordered on a strong point where eighteen hundred men had been killed the night before. The trumpets sounded and the army hastened to respond. All other tasks were abandoned, and, with others, their uniforms into order, their arms in readiness, the grenadiers fell into line.

Being ordered to hold his regiment in reserve, M. de la Puysaye conducted it behind a certain embankment, then sought to go after his horse. But his friends stopped him.

"Not now," they said; "the place is exposed; you would be risking your life needlessly."

La Puysaye returned to his place, and gave vent to his vexation. "Miserable orderly!" he cried—"my horse! See what he has done with my horse!"

"*Ciel!*" exclaimed a captain in astonishment, "why are you so concerned about the beast? From whom did you get him?"

La Puysaye, tired of keeping his secret, revealed it. "From De Bossué. He was, alas, one of my old friends."

The news was murmured through the ranks, while the officers marvelled audibly. "What an idea!" they said. "Where is he, that we may observe him again?"

"In that trench over there, which is so exposed. My orderly must have been drunk to leave him in such a place."

"Oh," cried an officer, "have no fear." Bossué's horse! The horse of a coward! He'll crouch when the bullets fly; you'll find him again safe and sound."

"After all," said another, "the trench covers him; he's satisfied to stay in it; he won't come out."

At that moment a bomb came singing through the air, and from the trench, calmly, proudly, defiantly, a horse emerged. He stood alone in the middle of the field, in a great open place—alone. The saddle was on his back, the bit in his mouth; and though he had lowered his neck in the silence following the first bomb, he seemed waiting only for a signal on his bridle.

"The coward's horse!" thought the army.

Just then the place seemed to fill with smoke, while the city beyond trembled as with an earthquake shock; three more bombs in the ranks of France, and fifteen files were cut down like so much grain.

The trumpets sounded the attack; and at that moment, suddenly, magnificently, the last rays of the setting sun clothed the horse in gold. He raised his head, as the brave steed does when the battle is on and the rider encourages him to advance; then, boldly, eagerly, joyously, he charged on the city at a gallop. Deaf to the thunder of the cannon, indifferent to the shot that whistled about him, glad to sniff again the smoke of powder, to feel once more the excitement of the combat, the gallant horse dashed on and on—a sublime spectacle for a whole army to witness.

What moved him to rush on the enemy so madly, to affront death so grandly? Was it the memory of Bossué's glorious battles? Was it the force of a habit acquired after a score of engagements—the result of a lesson learned on many fields?

They who followed swiftly after him did not know; but they swore afterwards that they had seen a hand on his bridle, feet pressing his sides, a shadowy form on his back, and for one brief instant a face, with a long scar on its left cheek and a look such as no coward ever wore.

The poor beast at length fell, bleeding from a score of wounds, but he had done enough; in the eyes of the army, he whose horse this had been was vindicated. Bossué was not a coward.

N. Christopher Burton.

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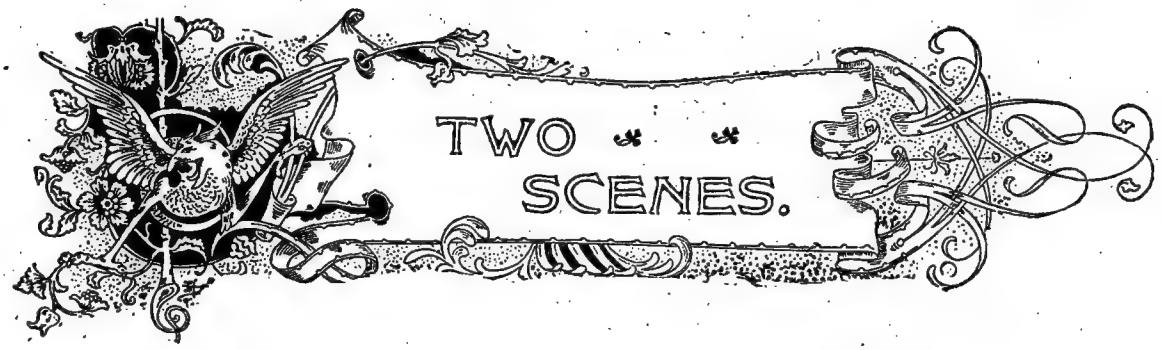

"I WONDER where you'll be this time next week. I think if I were a man I couldn't stop here. I suppose my saying that shows that one does not realise how awful war can be."

"Oh! I don't know. War must come sometimes. Do you really wish you were going out?"

"Yes, just to help look after you all, if anything—— But there, nothing will happen to you."

A little catch in her voice made the man look with still more interest into her pretty face.

Leaning over he said cheerily:

"Oh, well, a few may fall—probably some will—must, in fact——"

He hesitated.

As his face grew pale the thought seemed to force itself upon him more even than it had so often lately—the thought that he might never see the girl again.

He had felt somehow it would be better to postpone telling her till his return—but, he might never return. It would be better, then, that he had never spoken. Yet the desire was greater, grew overwhelming to tell her, and to feel sure that she loved him.

"Will you wait for me. I cannot go without telling you, dear. I love you. Say yes, and no bullet will find me, please Heaven."

No more words would come, as in feverish hope—or uncertainty—he awaited her answer.

Then he saw she no longer looked at him.

Following her eyes, he found another man gazing, with brows lifted satirically at him.

"My dance, Miss Serle! Excuse me, Nardon, won't you. I'm sorry to interrupt the piling on of the agony. Miss Serle is, I know, going to follow the doings of the Bromshires with the greatest interest."

As Nardon saw the girl he loved walk out of the conservatory with his superior officer and—he knew too well—rival, he seemed unable to say more, though he could have knocked the man down for his jeering.

Had the girl heard his declaration? Was there really any truth in the rumour that Major Flecter would after all win her?

No other dance with her. And to-morrow he would be getting well on his way down Channel. No chance of seeing her alone.

Ah! the music had ceased for good—the last dance was over. Everybody was going home.

As he came out of the conservatory, there she was on Flecter's arm evidently going down to her carriage. Flecter's look of cool possession exasperated him.

As she passed him, however, she turned to him.

"Good-bye, Captain Nardon, and the best of all luck." And as she shook hands with him she left her programme in his hand.

Mumbling out his good-bye, he watched the carriage roll off.

She was gone now.

Banishing thought he rushed home to complete his preparations for leaving.

And there he gazed on the programme at three scrawled words:

"Yes! Good-bye."

* * * * *

The Bromshire Regiment was distinguishing itself, but they were in a well nigh hopeless case.

By some awful mishap they had lost communication with the main body, and, only 800 strong, were keeping at bay 2000 Boers.

The Colonel, albeit with anxious face, was rushing hither and thither cheering his men on to withstand the attack long enough for support to be sent.

A galloper came up.

"The reserve ammunition has gone, sir. The mules got loose and could not be held."

The Colonel could not withold the words "My God!" as he heard the news.

Then summoning superhuman courage he shouted:

"Order the three left flank companies to retire two or three hundred yards and then gain the top of that hill to draw the Boer fire. The main body will retire at once."

One minute later, Major Flecter dashed up to the left of the battalion.

"Companies B, C, and D wheel about, and take possession of that kopje."

As he indicated the hill, his eyes lighted on Captain Nardon, waiting for the remaining order.

A look of malignant hatred swept over Flecter's face.

"As you were!" he thundered. "Companies C and D will carry out the first movement. Company B will descend into the valley to attract the enemy's attention."

The heat and hurry of the moment prevented Nardon attaching full meaning to Flecter's last order. His men were preparing to take up the new position. Everything depended on speed.

Nardon saw practically certain death for himself and his men in advancing to the spot most exposed to the raking shell fire of the Boers, but though he seemed to

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feel there was something wrong in the order, the movement seemed likely to effect a safe passing for the main body.

Flecter had retired to the centre. There, with gleaming face, in comparative cover, he had time to gloat over his work.

"Now he'll die. She was always fond of me before he came; curse him. She'll mourn him perhaps, but she'll marry me."

And as he watched the Boer fire suddenly directed at the gap in the valley, he felt all would soon be over with Company B and its captain.

It was then he suddenly blanched. How about himself. Would anybody survive?

It was too late. As they started back Flecter fell, hit in the side.

The order for retreat was given. They were to seize every bit of cover, and the direction was to be first along the left, into the back of the gap whose front Nardon and his men were guarding, and then behind the hill occupied by the other two companies.

In the front of the gap Nardon and his men, who were apparently not suffering much from the shell fire, were gallantly returning volley after volley.

Flecter, with the main body, rushed across the gap. As they crossed, the Colonel caught sight of Company B.

"Good Heavens," he shouted, "they will be cut to bits. They must retire. We shall get behind the kopje, and once there we are comparatively safe."

Close touch with death was having its effect on Flecter, and his horrible sacrifice of Nardon was not pleasing him so much. There he could see, a couple of hundred yards in front, as he clambered down, Nardon coolly directing his men in a biting rifle attack on the opposite hills, ever and anon glancing back to see how far the main body were from safety.

Nardon felt it was touch and go, his men were falling by twos and threes; yet perhaps he could gain the few minutes necessary.

The Boers were advancing in great numbers. In five minutes they would be within a hundred yards. Nardon glanced round and met Flecter's gaze. Mingled scorn and determination swept over the former's face.

Flecter stood dumfounded.

Nardon was coolly sacrificing himself to save his fellows in the rear, and now did not mean to give in.

"No! it must not be, I'll go, sir."

Flecter rushed into the wider opening of the gap, fully exposed to the enemy's fire.

"Back, Nardon," he shouted, "back. There's time yet."

Nardon turned, but returned to his charge.

"Back, we're safe," again shouted Flecter, who was now with the noble little company.

Only then did Nardon turn full round to see the main body disappearing behind the hill.

They were safe. Nardon gave the order to retreat at the double. It was too late. As they started back, Flecter fell, hit in the side.

Nardon rushed to his side.

"Don't wait, Nardon. You'll be safe now, thank God. Forgive me, Nardon," he gasped, "forgive me," and he sank back.

Nardon saw that nothing could be done.

Ah! What was that. Reinforcements, thank goodness. They were saved.

But scarcely twenty of Company B had escaped. With their dead lay an officer, but it was not Captain Nardon.

Major Flecter had made his repentance at the cost of his life.

S. B.

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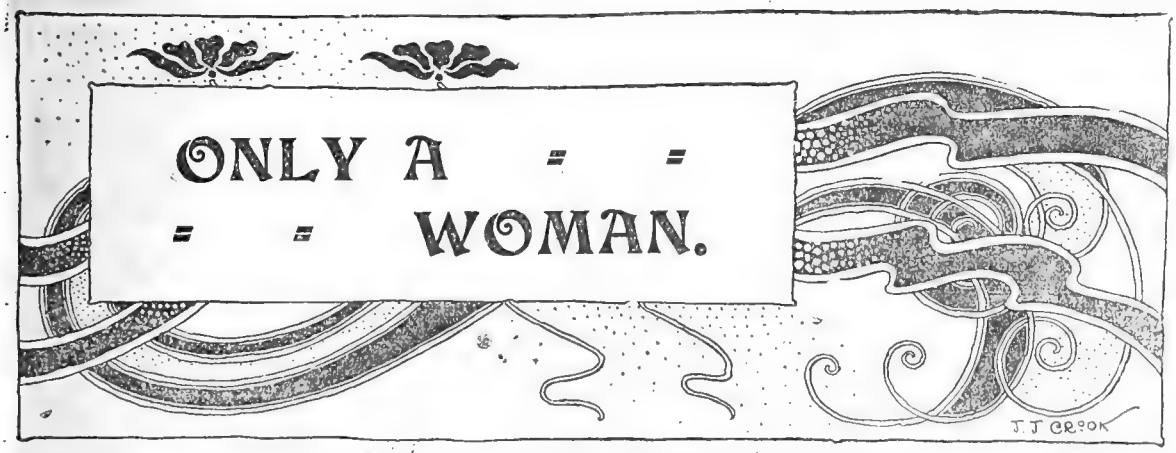

JESSIE TAURION was alone, with a curious ache in her heart, and the sounds of retreating footsteps beating wearily in her brain.

The footsteps ceased for a moment, a door banged, and then they echoed through the open window, slowly, firmly, and distinctly. There was something appealing in their slowness, but Jessie crushed down her rising pity, and taking up her brushes, began to paint steadily.

But the line between her brows grew deeper, the strokes of her brush slower and slower, until it dropped from her hand, making a smudge of bright red across the leg of the easel and on the floor in its fall. She put her hands up to her face and sat silently for a moment or two.

"I must learn to live without him," she said drearily. "It will be hard, but it is best. Oh! the greyness and loneliness of it." She sobbed, then with womanish inconsistency burst out, "Why didn't he explain? Why didn't he say he was sorry? He stood and blinked like an owl with a white face, and never said a word. The dolt. Why did he get so angry and say 'If a woman cannot trust she does not love.' Why did I say my love was dead? It isn't, Jack, it isn't, come back to me, come back."

She turned to the door, but there was no sound of footsteps, no answer. Sinking on the floor she buried her face in her arms, and tried with surging brain to realise the cost of the uprooting from her heart of a love she had deemed unworthily received.

Jessie Taurion was an artist, a woman full of poetry, common sense, and affection—but a woman. In giving her love to Jack Brayworth she had considered the possibilities before acknowledging to him the motive force his love was to her, and the strength she had gained since to him she had become one of the world's dearest women. It meant giving up her independence; and to a successful woman, a woman whose pictures were rapidly bringing wide fame to their painter, this is no small thing. But she gave it up cheerfully. It meant unlocking the doors of a barred world; it meant the merging of her life into that of another; it meant another state of existence. She had character, and treasuring this strong man's love, considered no sacrifice too great.

"Does he understand," she had often asked herself, "what marriage will mean to me?" and her heart and her common sense had answered "No."

She had not told him, had given him no hint, but, woman-like, was angry at his ignorance, and, lover-like, resented it. "Did his lack of perception or of thought betoken selfishness?"

Perhaps she was too analytical. It was not sufficient for her to know that Jack loved her because he loved her, or that she loved him because she did love him. She wanted reasons, almost to the chapter and verse, and in seeking the causes for it lost her love.

"Know thyself," is, doubtless, an excellent axiom, but it is infinitely better to know other people. Jessie Taurion knew herself so well that she hardly had time to know her lover.

Consequently she attributed entirely wrong motives to him, and he, instead of being greeted as was her custom, by a caress, on his appearance this morning received only coldness which he naturally resented.

His resentment angered her, and she lost her temper, accusing him of flirtation on the flimsiest pretext.

Bitterly hurt at her lack of trust, he had kept perfect silence, which annoyed her further, and then she had told him her love for him had died out of her heart.

Too proud, too hurt to ask explanation, he had merely said:

"It is only right. If a woman cannot trust, she does not love," and had left her.

Jessie crouched in her misery on the floor until the sun burning on her hair reminded her it was afternoon.

Then she rose and tried to work. But it was impossible. She had no heart. Colour she had gloried in meant nothing; it might have been black, and sadly she turned the easel to the wall and rang the bell.

A thought had occurred to her. Jack and she had been going to a gallery that afternoon, perhaps he had left a message with the maid. But she did not know Jack. There was no message.

Furious with herself for having thought his anger would relent, and vowing never to see him again, she packed up the dainty trifles he had given her; a piece of enamel, a quaint box covered with wrought-iron; a vestment of red brocade; a scent-bottle, the lid encrusted with turquoises; her engagement ring, an Egyptian signet, thousands of years old, which he had given her because it was his choicest treasure; a beaten silver bowl which he had filled every day with flowers; rich laces, pictures, photographs, a miniature of La Pompadour, were all heaped into a brass-mounted coffer, his gift also, and sent to his home.

Her studio was bare when she had stripped it of his gifts, but the anger was still in her heart, hot and fierce against him, and she scarcely felt the wrench. The

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past was better uprooted at once she felt, but her conscience told her that this step made its return impossible.

Jessie went away to Devonshire, leaving the easel with its picture to the wall, and worked steadily for a couple of months. An exhibition of her pictures brought her to London again, but only for a few weeks. In spite of the growing appreciation of her painting, she could not forget what had been. Her studio made her desperate. She could not bear to sit in it alone. All through the lonely weeks in the country she had felt that she alone was to blame, but pride and shame forbade her making the first advances.

In September she came back again, impelled by a reason she did not stop to fathom, and whilst all London was in the country or by the sea, she, the beggars and the cats shared the deserted squares and streets between them. Jessie would walk for hours at night through street after street, so that she might sleep through sheer physical weariness, and began a series of night scenes in London in September, which reflected the agony of mind and distress she was undergoing.

One night she had wandered far into the dreary outskirts of Bayswater, and suddenly discovered she had lost her way. It was bright moonlight, and she saw a man leaning against a wall near the end of the street. Running up to him she inquired the way, and to her horror found he was drunk. In answer to her question the drunkard turned round and leered at her, at the same time catching hold of her arm.

"You come along with me, Missie," he said, "I'll show yer the way proper."

Jessie gave a little scream of terror, and struggled to free herself. The sight of two men at the other end of the street gave her fresh courage, and she screamed louder still.

They ran up, the drunkard was knocked into the road, and then Jessie saw that one of them was Jack Brayworth. He made no sign. She felt paralysed, and with broken words of thanks walked away quickly.

About a week later, as she was driving home from a dinner at her sister's, she recognised a well-known figure standing near the gas-lamp at the end of the row of houses in which she lived. It was Jack Brayworth.

Flinging herself back in the cab, she passionately asked herself why he was there?

Then she remembered her maid had spoken of a man who was always hanging about the studios at night. Was it Jack, and was he always watching over her.

For the first time since she had driven her lover away, Jessie Taurion wept and wept bitterly. The tears bore away the barriers pride and womanly perverseness had builded over her heart, and after a sleepless night with the grey of the early dawn about her she wrote to Jack Brayworth.

"I cannot ask you to forgive me, since I have sinned too deeply against you. But I implore you to come to me. Your love was the strong arm on which I leant; it helped me to surmount all obstacles, and I cannot live without its support. I am entirely to blame, and I was utterly mad to speak to you as I did. I am very tired. Come to me."

In the dusk of the evening he came to her, and that night the rustling of the creeper over the window had a new meaning, and the distant hum of life a fuller sound of gladness to Jessie Taurion. A. Stockport.

The Romance of a Chemist's Shop.

When Theodore Burton first came to Banford, as manager of the little chemist's shop in the High Street, he thought he should have a dull time of it, but he soon changed his mind. Not that he knew many more people at the end of six months, than he had done at first, but he knew one, and that one comprised all Banford for him.

She came to the shop very often, as much as three times a week, and she always stayed for ten minutes or more, chatting gaily in her cheery cultivated voice. She was very pretty, too—or at least so thought Theodore—dark, with a bright, vivacious face, and such dancing, mischievous, blue eyes. But she had not been to the shop for nearly a week now, and Theodore was getting anxious, anxious about another matter too.

He had met her one evening, walking with a tall, dark man—a conceited looking fellow, Theodore thought—with whom she seemed to be on the best of terms, and he wondered who he was, and had been wondering ever since. Not that it mattered much to him, but he liked finding out things that puzzled him, so he resolved to discover who this fellow was. He hardly owned to himself how much he missed her, and how eagerly he looked forward to her next visit.

These visits were pleasant episodes in his monotonous life, he assured himself; her bright witty conversation cheered and amused him, and that was all. She could be nothing but a mere acquaintance to him, as he had been engaged for more than two years to Miss Clara Smith, a plain angular young woman in Leicester, but who possessed a neat little income.

Despite the fact of his engagement, however, Theodore saw no harm in a mild flirtation with his newly-formed acquaintance.

He had discovered that her name was Dorothy Williams, and she was not more than twenty-three he felt sure. But he must be careful, very, very careful.

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It would never do for her to get fond of him, which was more than likely she would do, seeing how handsome and fascinating he was, and he smiled complacently, and stroked his long golden moustache, as he caught a glimpse of his face in a strip of mirror which adorned the top of a fancy box of perfume.

But—ting, went the door bell and there she was, fair, smiling, and lovely as ever.

Theodore's heart seemed to leap to his mouth, and he actually blushed to the roots of his fair, luxuriant curls.

"Oh! Ah! Good morning, what may I have the pleasure of doing for you?" he stammered, trying hard to assume his wonted demeanour.

"Those dear little bottles in the window; I wish to know the price of each one so that I can choose," she answered smilingly. "I want a very pretty and yet inexpensive one, as the contents of my purse are limited."

"Suppose you take one now as a sample," Theodore suggested gallantly, "and then if you like the perfume you can always get another."

"Thank you, you are very kind," she replied a trifle primly, "but I think I would rather pay for it now."

She selected one and paid for it, but seemed in no hurry to go. Instead—to his great delight—she chatted pleasantly for quite a quarter of an hour, questioning the young chemist as to how he could afford to sell some articles so cheaply, and why others were so expensive; and expressing her opinions freely, relative to the merits and demerits of various toilet requisites. Theodore wished the conversation would change, and that she would talk of herself, but he was not bored by her questions and gave all the information in his power. After all, it showed how intellectual she was, and that she could take an interest in something other than a new dress, or pretty hat, though these latter evidently found favour in her eyes.

"I am so fond of the science of chemistry and drugs," she explained apologetically. "My brothers tease me about it, and say that I should belong to the pill-making fraternity; but you don't mind my tiresome questions, I know, you are so kind."

Mind! He would have gone on answering her questions for ever, as he hastened to assure her in somewhat modified terms. But alas! Pleasant moments come to an end all too soon. Another customer entered the shop, and having no further excuse for staying she took her deparure, thought not without reluctance, Theodore told himself triumphantly. When his other customer had gone, he found himself dwelling on his fair questioner's looks and words, with a persistence he could not shake off!

"I really believe I am in love with the girl," he muttered to himself, "and I'm positive she likes me too, or why does she come here so often? She doesn't buy anything much, it is only an excuse to get here to talk to me. Deuced awkward thing! What am I to do? If I throw over Clara she'll break her heart—and there's that money, too—but then, I can't have my lovely Dorothy break hers. Bother the girls! Why did the two of them fall in love with the same man? That's one of the penalties of being good looking. I must find out if Dorothy loves me, and if she does, well, Clara must go to the wall, money and all; and if she doesn't, why then, I can fall back on Clara, and no one any the wiser."

And having arrived at this satisfactory conclusion Theodore betook himself to his dinner, without one pang of remorse for the absent Clara, or her feelings, should Dorothy reciprocate his passion, which he hoped and believed she did.

Fortune favoured him. The next day was a half-holiday, and Mr. Burton closed his shop for a few hours, and set out for a long ramble through the woods, and as the unexpected always happens, the first person he saw walking ahead of him was—Dorothy.

A few rapid strides soon brought him up to her.

"How do you do, Miss Williams? This is an unexpected pleasure," he exclaimed, radiant with the delight he could not conceal. He fancied she did not look quite so pleased at first as she might have done, but she was soon as charming and bewitching as ever, and he felt that it was now or never, he would make a bold plunge, confident of success.

"I am more than glad I have met you," he resumed, "as I have something very important to say, something I could not say in the shop it is of infinite importance to me, as I venture to hope it will be to you. I——"

"I know what you are going to say," she interrupted hastily, "that I come to your shop too often, that people have begun to notice it, and so on. They are dreadful gossips about here, I know, my husband told me to be careful."

"Your what?" gasped Theodore.

"My husband. Didn't you know I was married?" she inquired sweetly.

"Know! How on earth should I know?" he returned in a strange voice. "Why didn't you tell me before?"

"Because you didn't ask me," she answered demurely.

"But why did you come to the shop so often, and—and talk so much," stammered the bewildered Theodore.

"Oh! I am afraid I have been very mean," she replied with a contrite air, "but my husband is setting up a large drug shop here and as you are the only chemist, I wished to find out your prices, so that we could undersell you as much as possible. Mean, wasn't it? But you know it is done every day in business."

"Was that fellow I met you with one night your husband?" he asked gloomily."

"I should say so," she replied, "as I don't go for a walk with any other 'fellow.'"

"Oh!" was all he said. To say that he had received a shock is saying little. His vanity was wounded and his pride hurt. He had received a blow from which he would be long in recovering. Thank goodness! Clara didn't know, she would never forgive him if she did, she was so jealous. He still had her and her money to fall back upon.

"Really, Mr. Burton, you seem quite cross," the sweet voice at his side exclaimed; "but you mustn't be, you must forgive me and let us still be friends. I must introduce you to my friend, Clara Smith, who is coming from Leicester to stay some weeks with me. I have written and told her all about you, and how nice and kind you were to me, and you'd never think how interested she was. She will be so amused when she hears that you thought I was single all the time. She isn't exactly pretty, but very, very nice. I am sure——" but Theodore suddenly remembered that he must hurry back to the shop, and raising his hat, almost flew away, leaving Dorothy smiling an enigmatical smile.

* * * * *

The next week the handsome Theodore had gone, and Banford knew him no more. A new manager—plain and middle-aged—presided over the little chemist's shop in the High Street.

Vera Browning.

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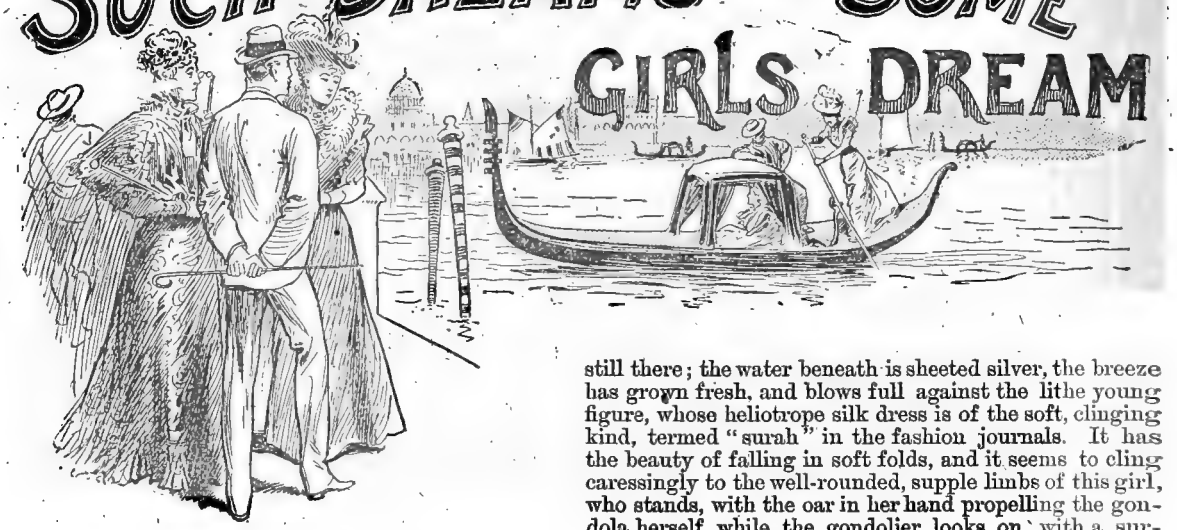
SUCH DREAMS AS SOME GIRLS DREAM



"SEE there!" exclaimed Mrs. Cadwallader, with a portentous wave of her hand—"one of that objectionable type of the English girl who brings discredit on our good breeding, and gives rise to erroneous ideas about our society amongst Continental people."

The good lady rustled all over with a sort of tremor of indignation. Her companions were a tall, aristocratic young girl, in a severely simple black satin dress, straight in its folds, clinging in its outline as the drapery of a statue, its sombre hue only relieved by three strings of amber beads wound closely about her throat; with a broad, black plush hat, and long black plumes, drooping over the pale, fair, high-bred face; and the other a young man, well groomed, with handsome dark eyes, a straight, positive-looking nose, a somewhat opinionated mouth, and, over all, that reserved and, at the same time, languid air supposed to be "good form" in exclusive circles.

The young lady slowly lifted her white eyelids, and faintly shrugged her drooping shoulders, as if to say, "Really, mamma, I have no interest in this sort of thing!"

Howard Winthrop, on the contrary, looked with a dawning interest kindling in his dark eyes.

It was a fresh October evening, and Venice was all aglow with light and sparkle. In the Plaza San Marco the white-coated bandsmen were making music in their own masterly manner.

Ladies in grand toilets sit and eat ices under the great arches, and street vendors of flowers and sweetmeats and lemonade, or the delicate white shell-work, and a hundred other trifles, go about with their wares. Red-sashed gondoliers, swarthy sailors, with great golden hoops in their brown ears, gorgeous Turks, Greek merchants, and the straight-browed Venetian ladies, with their dark, slumberous, melancholy eyes—all make a moving panorama of colour and light charming to the eye.

But our friends were not looking at this picture just now, but at a gondola near them, in which stood a young girl, her slight form thrown out in a cameo-like relief against the sky. The sun has set, but the after-glow is still there; the water beneath is sheeted silver, the breeze has grown fresh, and blows full against the lithe young figure, whose heliotrope silk dress is of the soft, clinging kind, termed "surah" in the fashion journals. It has the beauty of falling in soft folds, and it seems to cling caressingly to the well-rounded, supple limbs of this girl, who stands, with the oar in her hand propelling the gondola herself, while the gondolier looks on, with a surprised grin upon his face.

The light upon the flushed face shows intense and vivid colouring, and all the charms of youth and health, added to a sort of radiant independence of everybody and everything. The bronze gold hair that hangs in a bewitchingly soft, curly fringe almost down to the "wine-dark violet eyes," is carelessly blown by the same wind, and the long old-gold feather that decorates a plush hat of the same colour, sweeps out like a meteor upon the breeze.

"I knew I could do it, mamma," she is saying to a pale, delicate-looking woman, whose plain grey dress forms the greatest contrast to her daughter's. "It only needs practice to do anything."

Howard Winthrop could not resist the thrill of admiration that ran like a subtle electric fire through his whole being. The fresh, unconventional attitude, the radiant health and youth, the vigour, the fire, the *verve*.

At that moment, the long feather, having lost its hold in the rude struggle with the wind, fluttered away like some bright-winged bird, and sailing along for a moment with a sort of giddy delight in its freedom, dropped suddenly and softly as a golden shadow at the young man's feet.

He seized it rapturously but tenderly, and hastened nearer the water's edge. The flight had been noticed, and the gondola was turned toward the land.

The young lady looked about her as it stopped, and, having discerned a very handsome young man with her plume in his hand, she smiled a bewitching smile.

"It was carried to my feet," Howard said, bowing.

"She's dreadful for losing her things," said the mother, in a plaintive voice, hovering near, like a dim grey moth about a gorgeous butterfly. "Nothing ever stays on her that can get away."

"I would call that an evidence of the depravity of inanimate things," said Howard, with an admiring glance.

The mother looked puzzled. The daughter laughed.

"They come back, you see," she said.

"I should think they would," answered Howard. "I'm sure I wish I might."

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He was quite shocked at his own boldness, but perhaps more so at the girl's answer.

"I wish you would; we don't known anyone here."

Yet her face was so frank and ingenuous that he could not think evil of her cordiality.

"I should be glad to be of service to you in any way," he answered, readily. "I know Venice pretty well, as this is my third visit."

"We are not at a hotel, but at a *pension*, and it's very dull," she said. "We stayed one night at a place in the Plaza San Marco, but the people never go to bed there, and mamma could not sleep. We are abroad for her health, and so we had to find a quiet place, and it *is* quiet—oh, deadly quiet!"

Howard suddenly recollected his companions who were waiting for him, and drew out his card. The grey mother produced one of hers, and feebly seconded her daughter's invitation. The whole proceeding struck the young man as curious and unconventional in the extreme, as he walked back to his party. While he had looked at the radiant vision, it seemed correct and proper.

"They don't know me. I might be a blackleg and an adventurer. I hope they don't admit everyone so carelessly. The girl is so beautiful."

And he experienced a sort of pang at the fear that any one else should be taken into their acquaintance in the same unconventional manner.

"I can be of real service to them," he said to himself, as he took out the cards and read, "Mrs. John Stirling." "Miss Dulcie Stirling."

"Dulcie."

What an odd diminutive, yet it had a soft, clinging music about it that thrilled him. It was singing itself over and over again in his brain when he came upon Mrs. Cadwallader, looking very stately and sedate, and Miss Mabel with an additional frosting in her face and manner.

"Really, Howard, that very *outré* and curious person seemed to have something to say to you," said the elder lady.

But Howard did not satisfy the curiosity that was evident. He only bestirred himself to procure a gondola, and in a few moments they were afloat on the smooth, shining water. It is not yet dark, the after-glow has not yet faded.

The golden lamps shine out like golden flowers against the deep violet shadows. Domes and spires come out distinctly in that light, and all the serried masts of the merchant fleet at the mouth of the Quidecca stand up like lances. So they glide on till the darkness falls, and a pale crescent moon rises "like a silver sickle in a field of stars."

But Howard Winthrop is thinking of none of these things. He sees instead a slight figure in a pale purple gown, with a vivacious, sparkling face and wind-blown bronze hair. "She's deuced pretty, but 'bad form,'" he decides, as he lights his cigarette that night. Yet she had taken possession of his fancy, and seemed quite at home there.

No one could have been more astonished than our hero himself when, a few evenings after this, he found himself drifting over the sheeted silver of those same waters with the enchantress herself. How it had come about was not exactly clear to him; but it seemed as if the invitation had come from Miss Dulcie herself, and that her mother had failed at the last moment.

The girl frankly held out her hand: it was rosy-white and dimpled.

"We hire the gondola by the week," the young lady had volunteered, "and it's a pity to send it away with such a moonlight, too."

So Winthrop found himself at her side, feeling as if he were sailing in an enchanted boat on an enchanted sea.

"Mamma gets tired so soon," she says to him, frankly, "that I have to go about alone. One hour in a picture-gallery uses her up, and she doesn't remember anything about it, poor dear; so what's the use."

"But you are too young, and, excuse me, too pretty to go about without a chaperone," said Winthrop looking at the effects of moonlight on the glowing face that bloomed like a flower in that pallid light.

She wore a dress of Vandyke blue velvet, with a cape of white Spanish lace carelessly tied over it. About her neck was a quaint collar of filigree silver, and on her arms bracelets of the same delicate frostwork. A Rembrant hat of blue plush, with a long blue feather, held in place by a bird's silver claw, shaded but did not conceal the glory of her ruddy hair.

It gave Winthrop a sort of pang that he could not explain to look at her and think of her freedom.

It was not the proper thing at all.

"They have such musty, fusty ideas in this Old World," she said, smiling brightly up in his face, "I rather like to shock them. Perhaps I shock you, too?"

"Would you enjoy that?" the young man asked, evasively.

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"Oh no! I would rather you approved of me; though"—with a mutinous and bewitching smile—"I don't know that I would give up my own way to bring that about. I've been a good deal indulged—you have seen that, I know. The doctors told mamma long ago, when I was a child, that if I was opposed I would burst a blood-vessel and die. I'm afraid I've made use of her fear to get my own way. It's an ignoble confession to make, isn't it?"

"Yet you look extremely healthy," he answered, in a sceptical tone. "I own I should be tempted some time to oppose you. It's not healthful for any human soul to meet no crosses."

"Well, mamma consoles herself for her own weakness by thinking I may have a strong hand to rule me one of these days. She takes the most dismal views of matrimony, do you know, and says, 'Poor dear! she will suffer enough one of these days. Let her enjoy life now.'"

He ground his teeth in impotent rage when he saw his charmer leaning upon the Count's arm

"But you? I trust your views are more rose-coloured," said Winthrop, feeling his heart beat more rapidly, and half-despising himself for it.

What was this strange, impulsive creature to him?

"I? Oh, yes! I have my own dreams—what girl has not? I do not believe life is so leaden-hued as some say. The poets are particularly to blame for that, I think. They should be crowned with cypress instead of laurel, for all the dismal songs of grief and gloom they have perpetrated. But I have not seen the Fairy Prince yet—at least, I think I have not," with a mischievous look into Winthrop's eyes. "You know I am not eighteen, and not out."

Winthrop thought it would be hard to find a girl more emancipated, although she was not out.

"I predict all bright things for you," he said; "let me look at your hand. I learned palmistry once from an Arab."

The girl frankly held out her hand; it was rosy-white and dimpled. Its soft touch, as it lay in his own, thrilled Winthrop from head to foot.

"The line of life is——".

He hesitated. He knew it was all nonsense, but he felt his heart sink as he saw that mystic line so suddenly broken on the little rose-lined hand.

"Well, what is it? Shall I die soon? That will be when my husband contradicts me, I know."

Winthrop rallied, and spoke gayly.

"You will have a long life, a rich husband, and always have your own way. Here is a dark man who loves you."

It was quite in the approved gipsy style, and Dulcie nodded.

"Oh, yes. I know the dark man."

"What!" exclaimed Winthrop, in surprise, "I thought you knew no one."

"Oh, he is an Italian count we met at Trouville in the summer—a dark, gloomy fellow, with magnificent eyes. He has a history."

"They all have."

"He is very poor."

"They all are."

"And he talks English in a broken way, and in a low musical voice. He was teaching me Italian, and I am going on with the lessons when I get to Naples. He lives in Naples."

Winthrop could not account for the jealous pang that stabbed his heart.

"Mamma has been in constant terror lest I should fall in love with him on account of the romance of the thing; but I'm afraid of foreigners. I feel that Count Toriani could do any one of those dark deeds we read about in Italian romances; but there is an interest in being with a man who adores you," with a bright glance.

Winthrop winced.

"So he adores you, and tells you so?"

"Oh, yes. He reads me sonnets full of volcanic passion. He accounts for my indifference by believing that I am too young to be fully awakened to the best happiness of my life."

"And you go about with him?" Winthrop asked, in a dumb fury.

"Certainly. He is splendid-looking and a perfect gentleman. Besides he knows his country, as a foreigner could not do; and he appears to feel so much, that I cannot crush him at a blow—can I, now?"

Winthrop felt himself growing hard and cold at this information.

"You can only decide that for yourself," he said.

Somehow, the rest of the sail seemed to have lost its enchantment. They landed and climbed the sandy ridges that glisten in the silvery light.

Every pool is a molten mirror. Before them lies the placid lagoon, on one side a line of dark blue, with creamy waves crawling lazily upon the shore. It is the Adriatic.

It was in vain that Winthrop tried to withdraw himself from the subtle charm of Dulcie's society. In vain he repeated to himself that she was too unconventional—too impulsive for that strict and cool circle in which he moved at home.

Mrs Cadwallader shrugged her shoulders at the very mention of the girl, and Mrs. Cadwallader was the

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The Count stood glowering at them with gloomy eyes.

autocrat of his society. She had voted Miss Dulcie "crude—crude in the extreme," and there was scarcely a more significant term in that lady's vocabulary.

There was Mabel, a truly high-bred and perfect specimen of conventional breeding—a girl whose voice, musically modulated, was never raised above the regulation tone, whose step, floating and graceful, was never quickened by impulse, whose manner was cool, and quiet, and charming, but she charmed Winthrop no more.

He found himself longing for Dulcie's changing, ringing tones. There was everything in her voice, appeal, merriment, tenderness—it was as changed as her eyes, her face, her whole manner. She was never the same—a perpetual study, an eternal delight. She was *outré*, perhaps *bizarre*; but she fascinated him.

He spent all the time when he was away from her in steeling his heart against her, but with the first glance into her fearless bright eyes all his panoply fell from him, and he became her slave.

And so at last they find themselves together in Naples, and a new personage appears on the scene.

The tall, dark, melancholy nobleman, who expresses a whole record of past grandeur and fallen fortunes in his sallow, pathetic face and sombre, dark eyes, is seen everywhere with Dulcie.

Her mother seems to keep in the background as persistently as if she were indeed a grey moth, and shunned the daylight.

When the Count saw Winthrop, an antagonism seemed to spring up at once in his breast. He discerned a rival, and hated him from that moment.

As for our hero, he ground his teeth in impotent rage when he saw his charmer leaning upon the Count's arm, looking up with a bright smile into his face, listening to his broken sentences, as if they were the wisdom of the gods. He tried remonstrating with feeble Mrs. Stirling, who was just at that moment engrossed in a new symptom, and indifferent to everything else.

"It gives rise to remark," he said, "unless a young lady is engaged to the gentleman."

"Oh, dear me!" she wailed; "don't ask me to interfere. Dulcie does as she likes; she always has—she always will; I haven't the nerve to control her—and, after all, I'm sure of her, Mr. Winthrop. She is very independent, but she will do right always—I have that confidence about her. Do you know anything of Johumi's remedy for neuralgia? I have heard wonders of it."

Winthrop answered somewhat wildly, and got away in a discouraged mood. He must speak to the young lady herself. Most girls are keenly alive to rumour; and perhaps he might alarm her sufficiently to make her throw aside this languishing Count, who infuriated him so with his adoring airs.

It was a lovely sunset. As Winthrop stepped out upon the terrace between the sculptured vases full of trailing flowers, he saw a view which is, perhaps, the most famous in the world. The bay, like a shining crescent, lay before him, purple and emerald in the shadow of rocky headlands.

The fishing-barques, with their white wings, look like birds asleep on the blue waters.

There is a flicker of amber among the trailing ivies beneath him, and he hurries toward it. Dulcie is sitting there, idly picking some flowers to bits, a mosaic of bright leaves lies over her dress.

"So you serve the offerings of your victims?" he said, grimly.

"Oh, they are from the Count. I couldn't keep all he gives me."

"Does it never strike you that you might stop it, if you don't care for it?" Winthrop asked somewhat brusquely.

Dulcie opened her lovely eyes.

"But suppose it is not altogether unpleasant?"

"Oh, in that case it is quite correct, otherwise it might be better not to give rise to surmises that may be incorrect and injurious."

There was a slight rigidity about Dulcie's mouth and a little tremour in her voice.

"And why should *you* care?"

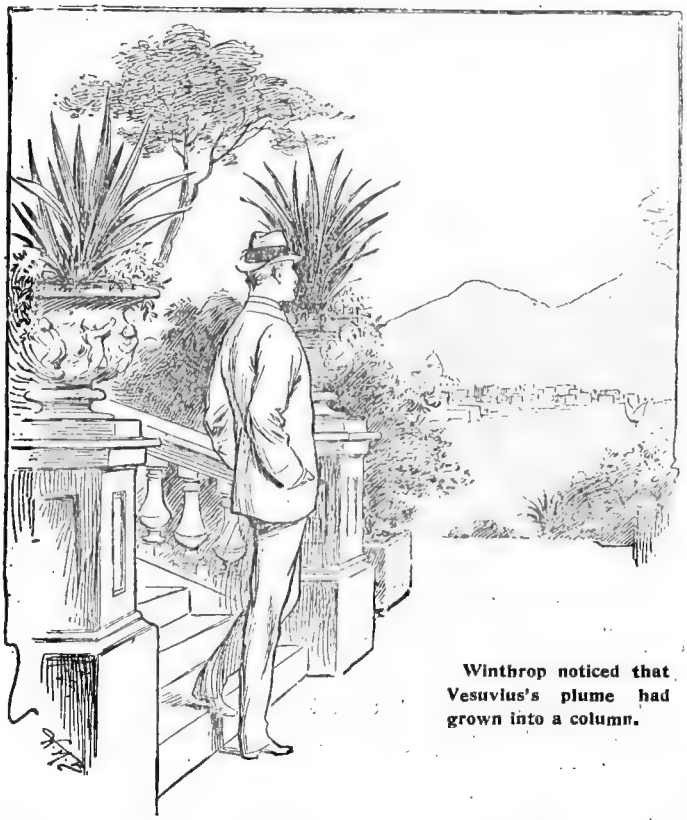
With those lovely eyes raised to his, the fresh young lips so near, the slender form within his reach, Winthrop's self-possession deserted him. A thicket of ivy and myrtle screened them from sight. He forgot everything but the rapturous beating of his own heart. In a second he had snatched her to his breast, and pressed a sudden kiss upon the scarlet lips.

"Because I love you, darling!" he murmured.

The golden-bronze head lay on his shoulder one second, while Dulcie said artlessly:

"Oh, I am glad—glad!" when a sudden rustle startled them. The Count stood glowering at them with gloomy eyes.

Winthrop started back, with a sudden impulse to knock him down, there was so much hate in the dark face. But he restrained himself—perhaps the man had



Winthrop noticed that Vesuvius's plume had grown into a column.

done him a service. He had interrupted a passing frenzy; yes, that was what our unworthy hero styled his unpremeditated confession.

"Leave me!" Dulcie whispered. "I must speak to him! I can calm the wild beast in him, I am sure!"

Winthorp was glad to go away. He felt quite breathless with the plunge he had taken. It was all over now—too late to escape.

Was it too late? He had been betrayed into a sudden declaration and a kiss. Well? Dulcie had heard many such, and had been kissed before, very likely. A girl so very unconventional—no, somehow Winthrop could not wrong her in his mind.

What was a kiss? He felt the touch yet upon his lips light as a rose-leaf, yet glowing as a flame. Should he give up all for that kiss? Dulcie was sweet and bewitching, but she was not the wife for him. She was "crude, undeniably crude."

He felt, somehow, all the harder to her that he had been betrayed into that weakness. He had looked upon himself as a self-poised, self-centred fellow, who had himself well in hand; this undisciplined rebound of his nature was owing to her.

Her unfettered nature had worked upon his own to his detriment; he must shake off the fetters.

He nerved himself to the task, and sat down to write. He would not see her again—he dared not. The very memory of her witchery stole to him like a subtle and bewildering perfume.

He must write.

Never was task so hard. Over and over again he attempted and tore into bits the unsatisfying result.

Now it was diffuse and kind; now it was too short and cold. At last, he kept one in despair.

It ran as follows:

My Dear Miss Dulcie,—I am called away so suddenly that I fear I shall not have the happiness of seeing you again. Forgive me for the liberty I took this afternoon. I cannot forgive myself. Believe me, the feeling was not feigned; but I scorn myself for the weakness that betrayed me into an expression of interest that I cannot indulge. Circumstances, our own spheres in society and the fitness of things, must all be consulted as well as that treacherous organ—the human heart. Make my adieux kindly to your mother.—With best wishes for yourself, I am,

Yours, very humbly and repentantly,
Howard Winthrop.

When the young man had dispatched this note, he began to pack hurriedly. He had not the nerve to meet the girl again after having sent it.

He resolved to wait until it was dark, and then to go. He could trump up some reason for the Cadwalladers.

The night was singularly alive and bright. Winthrop noticed that Vesuvius's plume had grown into a column; it grew beneath his eye, piling itself mass on mass. As he gazed, it was no longer a plume, but an arch that spanned half the horizon.

It grew rosy, fire-tipped. The dark billows were rose-crowned, the sombre mountains of smoke were flame-capped. The mountain was in eruption.

He paused to look. The sight charmed him and made him forget his journey for the moment.

There was a trembling in the earth, in the air. Then a volley of black vapour shot up, rent with veins of fire, like a cloud veined with lightning, and streams of lava—seething liquid flame—began crawling down the cone.

Standing so transfixed, Winthrop has forgotten everything. He is not aware of a dark shadow stealing behind him, or of the glitter of steel flashing near. Only when he hears a woman's cry and feels two round, young arms about his neck, does he realize that someone is crashing away through the shrubbery, and that Dulcie has fainted in his arms.

He lifts her to a long rustic seat near, and realizes for the first time that he has stopped near the garden—nay, that they are on the very spot where he had kissed her that very day. She lies there now pale as the stone Niobe that stands near, and he suddenly sees with a cold horror that there is blood streaming over her white dress.

But the lovely eyes are open for a moment, and an arm steals about his neck again.

"I saved you, did I not, darling? You are not hurt?"

"No, no—but you? I do not understand."

"It is a scratch. But the count's dagger was aimed for your heart. I have saved you—that is joy enough."

Then she fainted away again, and he is aware that the attendants are thronging about them—that the mother is hovering with feeble moans over her daughter—that a medical gentleman is examining the wound. "It is not serious," he says; and then Winthrop gives her up to other hands with a sickening feeling of reluctance, and she is carried into the house.

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He paces the garden-walks a long time, but scarcely looks at the wondrous panorama before him. Only he feels as if he, too, had undergone some strange convulsion of nature, as if a torrent of seething lava coursed through his veins instead of blood.

"And I have been ready to cast away such a love!" he groaned—"a love that could fling away life as a worthless thing for my sake. Oh, my darling, forgive me! I know I cannot live without you now."

Suddenly, the memory of the letter stabbed him like a dagger. It had not reached her, evidently, before she had left the house. His messenger had, indeed, stopped on the way to do a little courting on his own account.

"Oh, fool that I have been!" he cried, starting into a hurried walk. "My doom is sure if she sees that. She would never forgive that cursed, cold, heartless letter!—my proud darling!"

He hurried up to the hotel, hoping it might not yet have been delivered. He felt as if he would give ten years of his life to get that scrap of paper in his hand once more. He had some hope as he asked for Mrs. Stirling.

There seemed an unusual bustle about the halls. A flurried look in people's faces. Mrs. Stirling did not come to him. He made his way to their room. The door stood open.

"Is she worse?" he asked, as he caught Mrs. Stirling hurrying by. "Is the wound more serious than the doctor thought?"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, go away!" moaned the mother. "She has burst a blood-vessel, the doctor says. It is not the wound at all, only he says the excitement may have brought it on. She was quite calm, and was reading a note someone brought her. She gave a strange cry as she looked at it, and the blood gushed from her mouth. There is no hope. I cannot be calm, and so they will not let me stay with her. No—no, you must not go in."

But Howard Winthrop heeded nothing. He strode onward to the couch upon which they had laid the wounded girl. She was ghastly white but conscious, and turned from him with a shudder.

He forgot conventionality then. It mattered not to him that his conduct was "bad form." He dropped on his knees at the bedside and gasped out:

"Forget it, Dulcie; it is not true. I have found out my own heart now, and know that you are my life. I love you—before Heaven, I love you!"

She lifted her languid eyes to him, and the shadow of a smile touched her pallid lips.

"I told you that I had never been crossed in my life. You see, when it came I could not bear it. I am going to die, because I cannot have my own way. I am a poor weak creature, after all."

"You are heroic," cried Howard, with a great sob in his throat; "do not slip away from me now, then I know your worth. Oh, darling! God has angels enough without you. Tell me—tell me you forgive."

She held out the crushed slip of paper she still had in her hand.

"Take it," she whispered faintly. "I forgive—and believe—in spite—of all—that you love me."

A grey pallor settled on her face, and Winthrop was hustled from the room to pace his own floor till the sudden hush that falls on all earthly sounds when one Presence enters settles down over all. He knew he had thrown away the most priceless boon ever offered to man, that he had murdered his own happiness for ever.

He could hear the "Never, never," whispered by the phantom years.

A voice that followed him with a ceaseless cadence of pain, saying always, "It might have been. It might have been."

Fayette Crosby.

Someone is crashing away through the shrubbery, and Dulcie has fainted in his arms.

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RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM
Nos. 12 to 15.

No. 12.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to Miss Maud Abbott, of York Villa, Norbiton.

A copy of "The Impudent Comedian and Others," by Frankfort Moore, to:

Mrs. Newton, 1 George Street, Hedon, Yorks; D. Price-Williams, Hill Brow, Eastbury Road, Northwood, Middlesex; Miss L. Stafford, 24 Market Place, Great Yarmouth; Miss L. Godding, 32 Orchard Road, Southsea; M. David, The Towers, Crowthorne, Wellington College.

No. 13.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to Mr. J. McCoy, of Aughton Street, Ormskirk.

A silver-plated pencil-case has been sent to each of the following:

H. Sparks, 10 Mill Crescent, Tonbridge; T. W. Rose, Manor Cottage, Bitterne Park, Southampton; Miss N. Prichard, Donnington Manor, Stow-on-the-Wold; George Badger, 60 Shakespeare Street, Cardiff; F. Bessant, Eton Place, Falmouth.

No. 14.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to Mrs. A. Palmer, of Farnham, Stanley Road, Morecambe.

A copy of "The Raid of the Detrimental" to:

C. Lowther, 3 Jeffrey's Place, Oystermouth Road, Swansea; G. Beaver, 83 Drakefell Road, Nunhead, S.E.; P. Fletcher, 101 High Street, Newton-le-Willows; W. J. Webster, Abbey Terrace, East Malling, Kent; E. Gregory, 47 Barlow Road, Levenshulme.

No. 15.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to Mr. W. E. Morse, 11 South Terrace, Hastings.

A silver-pated pencil-case to:

Miss Lily Wright, 101 Holt Road, Liverpool; R. W. Pordige, Thornedene, St. Leonards; J. F. Galvin, 59 Royal Avenue, Belfast; M. A. Williamson, 56 Prince Street, Peterhead; Miss Jenkin, Rose Cottage, Tredegar Road, Ebbw Vale, Mon.

See *Short Stories* Feb. 24th.] [First Instalment.

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No. 18.—

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      e     l o l
    r n o   e d e o n
  L o r d   N e l s o n
    d o e   d o l e r
      l     s n   r
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No. 19.—He has fallen out of the frying pan into the fire.

No. 20.—

"For Time will teach thee soon the truth,
There are no birds in last year's nest!"
Longfellow's "It is not always May."

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT THE WAR.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Knight of King's Guard," by Ewan Martin, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. D. Wilson, 9 Argyle Street, Greenock. Attempts for this week's prize should deal with WAR ANECDOTES and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, February 12th. Post-cards only, please.

Reckoning Without the Hens.

On the boundary of a large town on the Clyde, there lives an old woman, named Aunt Su, who makes a living by keeping a fews hens, etc., and who takes her eggs weekly to the town to sell.

One day, before she left the shop, the grocer said:

"Look here, Aunt Su, the grocers have held a meeting last night and they have decided to reduce the price of the eggs."

Aunt Su said nothing, but went her way.

Next visiting day, having picked the smallest eggs, she again called on the grocer, who on seeing the size of the eggs, said:

"Why, what is the meaning of this, why are the eggs so small?"

"Well," answered Aunt Su, "the hens held a meetin' las' night, wi' the result that they're no' goin' ta lay bigger anes ta the price has been raised."

The price was raised. D. W.

Beating the Record.

An old Scotch housewife was debating with a neighbour on one occasion as to who of the twain could recall the windiest day in their Highland valley.

"I mind sic a wind blawin' ane winter," said the first speaker, "that thae rooks were five 'oors fleein' hame frae the North Brae tae their nesties at Hill Fell, which is no mair than twa miles."

"Hoots, wumman, that's juist naething at a'! Ah've minded it that windy that the rooks couldna' flee at a', an' had tae walk hame!"

W. C.

Not the Sort of Glass he Wanted.

A good story is told of one of the new school of Scotch parsons who was recently preaching in a strange church in a village. Fearing his hair was not properly parted in the middle, or that he had a smudge on his nose, he quietly and significantly said to the beadle—there being no mirror in the vestry:

"John, could you get me a glass?"

John disappeared, and after a few minutes, returned with a parcel underneath his coat, which, to the astonishment of the parson, he produced, in the form of a lemonade bottle with a gill of whisky, saying:

"Ye mauna lat on about it, minister, for I got it as a great favour, and I wadna hae got it ava if I hadna said it was for you!"

Tableau! W. B.

The Jehu Again.

A few days ago the traffic in one of the principal London thoroughfares was being regulated by a policeman, who held up his hand to stop two or three cabs in order to let an old lady cross the road.

One cabby, however, did not stop immediately he saw the policeman's signal, which caused the bobby to sing out in a loud voice:

"Didn't you see me hold up my hand?"

"Well," said cabby, "it did grow dark suddenly, but I had all my work cut out to keep my horse from shying at your feet!" S. J. B.

The Worst of all Swindles.

When a well-known theatrical lady was touring in America with her burlesque company, she arrived at a settlement in the Far West. Hers was the first dramatic company ever seen there, the "lecture hall" being generally occupied by panoramas of the Civil War.

A stage was fitted up in the hall, and an act-drop and curtain combined was painted.

On the night of the performance, the first to arrive was a six-foot miner. He paid his half-dollar, and took a front seat in the pit. After staring at the newly-painted curtain (representing a waterfall) for about ten minutes, he rose and went out. As he passed the ticket-taker he observed:

"Wall, that's the rankest panoramer ever I seed for half-a-dollar." K. D.

Not Quite Disinterested.

Some years ago an active young fellow rushed on to the Temple Pier just in time to see the paddle-wheels of the steamer by which he wished to travel beginning slowly to revolve. Rather than lose the boat, he sprang on deck from the floating pier, clearing a distance of some three or four feet.

No sooner had he performed this not very hazardous achievement, when an elderly gentleman began to remonstrate with him on the foolhardiness of running so great a risk.

The young man could not help feeling flattered at the interest displayed on his behalf by one to whom he was a total stranger, and was on the point of giving vent to his feelings when the seemingly benevolent old gentleman thus concluded his remonstrance:

"You know, sir, you might have missed your footing and been drowned, in which case your family would probably have brought an action against the steamboat company, and I'm a shareholder!" S. H.

She Put Her Foot Down.

A little girl had been ill, and had struggled through the early stages of convalescence. She had taken "nourishing" broths and "nourishing" jellies until her soul was weary of them.

One morning she electrified the family by sitting bolt upright in bed, and saying:

"I want you to take notice. I'm not going to take any more nourishment. I'm hungry and I want my dinner, and not another mouthful of nourishment will I eat." N. F.

The Only Topic.

A train ran into a certain railway station last week, and a first-class passenger sprang out and ran into the refreshment-room for a cup of tea. The train started and he made a dash for it, but was pulled back by a porter. Furiously angry at losing the train, he assailed the porter with many severe words. The crowd on the platform sided with the official.

"He only did his duty," said one.

"He may have saved your life," said another.

"If you abused me like that, I'd give you something!" cried a third.

"I wouldn't mind," said the passenger bitterly, "only I'm under orders to sail with my regiment for the front to-morrow morning, and now I'll lose the boat."

For an instant the crowd was silent, then with one accord it turned upon the luckless porter.

"You officious rascal!" cried one.

"You ass! Do you know you're only the servant of the public?" shouted another.

"You scoundrel!" roared a third. "If I were the officer I'd pound the life out of you!"

W. J. O.

Told by One of the Regulars.

Soldiers belonging to line regiments are fond of telling stories at the expense of the militia. Here is one which was related before they came so prominently before the great B.P. owing to the present war.

While a certain militia regiment was encamped on a well-known common, a woman with her children came out there for an outing. During the time she was playing with the children a militiaman, passing, stole a loaf and ran off. The woman observing him, commenced calling:

"Stop thief!"

The colonel was close at hand, and, hearing the cry, rode up, asking the reason.

"That thief has stolen my loaf."

"Never mind," said the colonel, giving her half-a-crown; "this will get another for you. But for goodness' sake don't call 'Stop thief!' or I shan't have a man left in the regiment."

F. C.

Chaffing the War Office.

In one of our military stations the following correspondence is recorded between the senior commissariat and the War Office:

"The senior commissariat officer requests forage allowance for a second horse, as the distance from U—— to N—— is seventeen miles, and as the senior commissariat officer has to visit it three times a week, the work is too much for one horse."

In due course the following reply was received by the commissariat officer:

"I am directed by the Under Secretary of State to inform you that your application for forage for a second horse cannot be entertained, as the distance from U—— to N——, as the 'crow flies,' is only ten miles."

To which the following reply was sent:

"Sir, I beg to inform you that I do not ride a crow—I ride a horse."

The forage for the second horse was granted, but the general officer commanding was requested to speak to the commissariat officer for his levity in official correspondence. M. H.

The Prince of Wales's Joke.

The Prince of Wales, it is said, occasionally likes to crack a joke over his mother's propensity for giving away Indian shawls.

At the Henley Regatta a year or two ago he was on a steam launch with a party engaged in scrutinising the other craft on the river. Their attention was especially drawn to a boat containing a pleasure party, one member of which was an elderly lady bearing a remarkable likeness to the Queen, and she seemed bent upon doing all in her power to heighten the resemblance.

One of the party on board the launch approached the Prince and ventured to draw his attention to the lady in question, jocularly suggesting that it was the Queen viewing the regatta *incognito*.

Just as His Royal Highness was levelling his field-glass upon her, she rose, and, taking the shawl on which she had been sitting, threw it round the shoulders of a young girl who was with her.

"It is undoubtedly the Queen," replied the Prince quietly. "She has discovered herself. I see that she has just presented one of her Indian shawls."

E. A.

People Who Ought to Marry.

They were discussing profound subjects with the cynicism that only youth can develop.

"I have given the subject serious thought," she said, "and I have decided long ago that I would never marry."

"That shows you are a woman of intellect," he answered admiringly, "I long ago reached the same determination."

"Marriage," she observed, "is a state in which the chance for sorrow is great and the prospect of happiness is small."

"Very true. And what is more, it is a confession that one's intellectual cultivation is insufficient to elevate him above the necessity of companionship."

He had been holding her hand all this time, but neither of them seemed to realise the fact.

"Every rule," she said thoughtfully, "is proved by its exceptions."

"Yes, and I was just thinking——"

"What, Orlando?"

"That two people who hold such similar views of life as you and I ought to manage to get on splendidly."

She blushed and sighed and murmured:

"I was just thinking that it is very seldom that folks find such a true bond of sympathy as we have discovered."

W. W.

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THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION

By GEORGE GRIFFITH

CHAPTER LXVI.

ARMAGEDDON.

On the southern side of London the struggle between the Franco-Italian armies and the troops of the Federation had been raging all night with unabated fury along a curved line extending from Bexley to Richmond.

The railways communicating with the ports of the south and east had, for their own purposes, been left intact by the commanders of the League; and, so sudden and utterly unexpected had been the invasion of the force from America, and the simultaneous uprising of the British Section of the Brotherhood, that they had fallen into the hands of the Federationists almost without a struggle. This had enabled the invaders and their allies to concentrate themselves rapidly along the line of action which had been carefully pre-determined upon.

Landing almost simultaneously at Southampton, Portsmouth, Shoreham, Newhaven, Hastings, Folkestone, Dover, Deal, Ramsgate, and Margate, they had been joined everywhere by their comrades of the British Section, whose first action, on receiving the signal from the sky, had been to seize the railways and shoot down, without warning or mercy, every soldier of the League who opposed them.

What happened at Harwich had at the same time and in the same fashion, happened at Dover and Chatham. The troops in occupation had been caught and crushed at a blow between overwhelming forces in front and rear. Added to this, the International was immensely stronger in France and Italy than in Russia, and therefore the defections from the ranks of the League had been far greater than they had been in the north.

Thousands had donned the red ribbon as the Signal flashed over their encampments, and when the moment came to repel the assault of the mysterious grey legions, that had sprung from no one knew where, the bewildered French and Italian officers found their regiments automatically splitting up into squads of tens and companies of hundreds, obeying other orders, and joining in the slaughter of their former comrades with the most perfect *sang froid*. By daybreak on the 6th the various divisions of the Federationists were well on their way to the French and Italian positions to the south of London. The utmost precautions had been taken to prevent any news reaching head-quarters, and these, as has been seen, were almost entirely successful.

The three army-corps sent southward with General le Gallifet met with a ruinous disaster long before they came face to face with the enemy. Ten of the fleet of thirty war-balloons which had been sent to co-operate with them, had been manned and commanded by men of the International. They were of the newest type and the swiftest in the fleet, and their crews were armed with the strangest weapons that had yet been used in war. These were bows and arrows, a curious anachronism amidst the elaborate machinery of destruction evolved by the science of the twentieth century, but none the less effective on that account. The arrows, instead of being headed in the usual way, carried on the end of the shaft two little glass tubes full of liquid, bound together, and tipped with fulminate.

When the fleet had been in the air about an hour these ten aerostats had so distributed themselves that each of them, with a little manœuvring, could get within bowshot of two others. They also rose a little higher than the rest. The flutter of a white handkerchief was the signal agreed upon, and when this was given by the man in command of the ten each of them suddenly put on speed, and ran up close to her nearest neighbour. A flight of arrows was discharged at the gasholder, and then she headed away for the next nearest, and discharged a flight at her.

Considering the apparent insignificance of the means employed, the effects were absolutely miraculous. The explosion of the fulminate on striking either the hard cordage of the net or one of the steel ribs used to give the gasholder rigidity broke the two tubes full of liquid. Then came another far more violent explosion which tore great rents in the envelope. The imprisoned gas rushed out in torrents and the crippled balloons began to sink, at first slowly and then more and more rapidly, till at last the cars, weighted with screws, machinery, and explosives, struck the earth with a crash and exploded like so many huge shells amidst the dense columns of the advancing army.

In fifteen minutes each of the ten captured aerostats had sent two others to the earth, and then, completely masters of the position, those in charge of them began their assault on the helpless masses below them. This was kept up until the Federation troops appeared. Then they retired to the rear of the French and Italian columns and devoted themselves to burning their stores and blowing up their ammunition-trains with fire-shell.

Assailed thus in front and rear, and demoralised by the defection of the thousands who, as soon as the battle became general, showed the red ribbon and echoed the fierce battle-cry of the Federation, the splendid force sent out by General le Gallifet was practically annihilated by midnight, and by daybreak the Federationists, after fifteen hours of almost continuous fighting, had stormed all the positions held by the French and Italians to the south of London, the batteries of which had already been destroyed by the air-ships.

Thus, when the *Ithuriel* passed over London on the morning of the 7th, the position of affairs was as follows: The two armies which had been detached by the Tsar and General le Gallifet to stop the advance of the Federationists had been destroyed almost to a man. Of the two fleets of war-balloons there remained twenty-two aerostats in the

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hands of the Terrorists, while the twenty-five sent by the Tsar against the air-ships had retired at nightfall to the depôt at Muswell Hill to replenish their stock of fuel and explosives. Their ammunition-tenders, slow and unwieldy machines adapted only for carrying large cargoes of shells, had been rammed and destroyed with ease by the air-ships during the running, or rather flying, fight of the previous afternoon,

At sunset on the 6th the whole available forces of the League which could be spared from the defence of the positions, numbering more than three million men, had descended to the assault on London at nearly fifty different points.

No human words could convey any adequate conception of that night of carnage and terror. The assailants were allowed to advance far into the mighty maze of streets and bye-ways with so little resistance that they began to think that the great city would fall an easy prey to them after all. But as they approached the main arteries of central London they came suddenly upon barricades so skilfully disposed that it was impossible to advance without storming them, and from which, as they approached them, burst out tempests of rifle and machine-gun fire, under which the heads of columns melted away faster than they advanced.

Light quick-firing guns, posted on the roofs of lofty buildings, rained death and mutilation upon them. The air-ships, flying hither and thither a few hundred feet above the house-tops, like spirits of destruction, sent their shells into the crowded masses and wrought the most awful havoc of all with their frightful explosives, blowing hundreds of men to indistinguishable fragments at every shot, while from the windows of every house that was not in ruins came a ceaseless hail of missiles from every kind of fire-arm, from a magazine rifle to a shot-gun.

When morning came the Great Eastern Railway and the Thames had been cleared and opened, and the hearts of the starving citizens were gladdened by the welcome spectacle of train after train pouring in laden with provisions from Harwich, and of a fleet of steamers flying the Federation flag, which filled the Thames below London Bridge, and was rapidly discharging its cargoes of food at the wharves and into lighters.

As fast as the food could be unloaded it was distributed, first to the troops manning the barricades, and then to the markets and shops, whence it was supplied free in the poorer districts and at the usual price in the richer ones. All that day London feasted and made merry, for now the Thames was open there seemed to be no end to the food that was being poured into the City, which twelve hours before had eaten its last scanty provisions. As soon as one vessel was discharged another took its place, and opened its hold filled with the necessaries and some of the luxuries of life.

The frightful butcheries at the barricades had stopped for the time being from sheer exhaustion on both sides. One cannot fight without food, and the defenders were half-starved when they began. Rage and the longing for revenge had lent them strength for the moment, but twelve hours of incessant street fighting, the most wearing of all forms of battle, had exhausted them, and they were heartily glad of the tacit truce which gave them time to eat and drink.

As for the assailants, as soon as they saw conclusive proof that the blockade had been broken and the City victualled, they found themselves deserted by the ally on whose aid they had most counted. While the grip of famine remained on London they knew that its fall was only a matter of time; but now—if food could get in so could reinforcements, and they had not the remotest idea as to the number of the mysterious forces which had so suddenly sprung into existence outside their own lines.

Added to this their losses during the night had been something appalling. The streets were choked with their dead, and the houses into which they had retired were filled with their wounded. So they, too, were glad of a rest, and many spoke openly of returning to their lines and abandoning the assault. If they did so it might be possible to fight their way to the coast and escape out of this huge death-trap into which they had fallen on the very eve of their confidently-anticipated victory.

So, during the whole of the 7th there was little or no hard fighting in London, but to the north and south the grey legions of the Federation fought their way mile by mile over the field of Armageddon, gradually driving in the two halves of the Russian and the Franco-Italian armies which had been faced about to oppose their progress while the other halves were making their assault on London.

As soon as news reached the Tsar that the blockade of the river had been broken he had ordered twelve of his remaining war-balloons to destroy the ships that were swarming below London Bridge. Their fuel and cargoes of explosives had been renewed, and they rose into the air to execute the Autocrat's command just as Natasha had taken leave of Arnold on her errand of mercy. He fathomed their design at once, and instantly changed the course of the *Ithuriel* to the north-eastward. As soon as he had got within easy range he said to his lieutenant, who had just come on deck:

"Mr. Marston, those fellows mean mischief. Put a three-minute time fuze on a couple of No. 3 fire-shells and load the bow guns."

The order was at once executed. He trained one of the guns himself, giving it an elevation sufficient to throw the shell over the rising balloons. As the sixtieth second of the first minute passed he released the projectile. It soared away through the air and burst with a terrific explosion about fifty feet over the ascending aerostats.

The rain of fire spread out far and wide and showered down upon the gas-holders. Then came a concussion that shook the air like a thunderclap as the escaping gas mixed with the air, took fire, and exploded. Seven of the twelve aerostats instantly collapsed and plunged back again to the earth, spending the collective force of their explosives on the slopes of Muswell Hill. Meanwhile the second gun had been loaded and fired with the same effect on the remaining five.

Arnold then ran the *Ithuriel* up to within a mile of Muswell Hill, and found the remaining thirteen war-balloons in the act of making off to the northward.

"Two more time-shells, quick!" he cried "They are off to take part in the battle to the north, and must be stopped at once. Look lively or they'll see us and rise out of range!"

Almost before the words were out of his mouth one of the guns was ready. A moment later the messager of destruction was speeding on its way, and they saw it explode fairly in the midst of the squadron. The second followed before the glare of the first explosion had passed, and this was the last shot fired in the aerial warfare between the air-ships and the war-balloons.

The effect of these two shots was most extraordinary. The accurately-timed shells burst, not over, but amidst the aerostats, enveloping their cars in a momentary mist of fire. The intense heat evolved must have suffocated their crews instantaneously. Even if it had not done so their fate would have been scarcely less sudden or terrible, for the fire falling in the cars exploded their own shells even before it burst their gas-envelopes. With a roar and a shock as though heaven and earth were coming together a vast dazzling mass of flame blazed out, darkening the daylight by contrast, and when it vanished again there was not a fragment of the thirteen aerostats to be seen.

"So ends the Tsar's brief Empire of the air!" said Arnold, as the smoke of the explosion drifted away. "And twenty-four hours more should see the end of his earthly Empire as well."

"I hope so," said Natasha's voice at his elbow. "This

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awful destruction is sickening me. I knew war was horrible, but this is more like the work of fiends than of men. There is something monstrous, something superhumanly impious, in blasting your fellow-creatures with irresistible lightnings like this, as though you were a god instead of a man. Will you not be glad when it is over, Richard?"

"Glad beyond all expression," replied her lover, the angry light of battle instantly dying out of his eyes as he looked upon her sweetly pitiful face and melting eyes. "But tell me, what success has my angel of mercy had in pleading for the lives of her enemies?" he continued, slipping his arm through hers and leading her aft.

"I don't know yet, but my father told me to ask you to go to him as soon as you could leave the deck. Go now, and Richard, remember what I said to you when you offered me the empire of the world as we were going to Aeria. No one has such influence with the Master as you have, for you have given him the victory and delivered his enemies into his hands. For my sake, and for Humanity's, let your voice be for mercy and peace—surely we have shed blood enough now!"

"It shall, angel mine! for your sweet sake I would spare even Alexander Romanoff himself and all his staff!"

"You will never be asked to do that," said Natasha quietly, as Arnold disappeared down the companion-way.

It was nearly an hour before he came on deck again, and by this time the *Ithuriel*, constantly moving to and fro over London, so that any change in the course of events could be at once reported to Natas, had shifted her position to the southward, and was hanging in the air over Sydenham Hill, the head-quarters of General le Gallifet, whence could be plainly heard the roar of the tide of battle as it rolled ever northward over the hills of Surrey.

An air-ship came speeding up from the southward as he reached the deck. He signalled to it to come alongside. It proved to be the *Mercury* taking a message from Tremayne, who was personally commanding the Army of the South in the *Ariel*, to the air-ships operating with the Army of the North.

"What is the message?" asked Arnold.

"To engage and destroy the remaining Russian war-balloons, and then come South at once," replied the captain of the *Mercury*. "I am sorry to say both the *Lucifer* and the *Azrael* have been disabled by chance shots striking their propellers. The *Lucifer* was so badly injured that she fell to the earth, and blew up with a perfectly awful explosion; but the *Azrael* can still use her fan-wheels and stern propeller, though her air-planes are badly broken and twisted."

Arnold frowned at the bad news, but took no further notice of it beyond saying:

"That is unfortunate, but, I suppose some casualties were inevitable under the circumstances." Then he added; "I have already destroyed all that were left of the Tsar's war-balloons, but you can take the other part of the message. Where is the *Ariel* to be found?"

The captain of the *Mercury* gave him the necessary directions, and the two air-ships parted. Within an hour a council of war, consisting of Natas, Arnold, and Tremayne, was being held in the saloon of the *Ithuriel*, on the issue of which the lives of nearly two millions of men depended.

CHAPTER LXVII.

Victory.

It was a little after three o'clock in the afternoon when Natas, Tremayne, and Arnold ended their deliberations in the saloon of the *Ithuriel*. At the same hour a council of war was being held by Generals le Gallifet and Cosensz at the Crystal Palace Hotel, Sydenham, where the two commanders had taken up their head quarters.

Since daybreak matters had assumed a very serious, if not desperate aspect for the troops of the League to the south of London. Communication had entirely ceased with the Tsar since the night before, and this could only mean that his Majesty had lost the command of the air, through the destruction or disablement of his fleet of aerostats. News from the force which had descended upon London told only of a fearful expenditure of life that had not purchased the slightest advantage.

The blockade had been broken on the east, and, therefore, all hope of reducing the city by famine was at an end. Their own war-balloons had been either captured or destroyed, thousands of their men had deserted to the enemy, and multitudes more had been slain. Every position was dominated by the captured aerostats and the air-ships of the Terrorists. Even the building in which the Council was being held might be shattered to fragments at any moment by a discharge of their irresistible artillery.

Finally, it was practically certain that within the next few hours their head-quarters must be surrounded, and then their only choice would lie between unconditional surrender and swift and inevitable destruction by an aerial bombardment. Manifestly the time had come to make terms if possible, and purchase their own safety and that of their remaining troops.

Both the generals and every member of their respective staffs saw clearly that victory was now a physical impossibility, and so the immediate issue of the council was that orders were given to hoist the white flag over the tricolour and the Italian standard on the summits of the two towers of the Crystal Palace, and on the flagstaffs over the head-quarters.

These were at once seen by a squadron of air-ships coming from the north in obedience to Tremayne's summons, and within half-an-hour the same squadron was seen returning from the south headed by the flag-ship, also flying, to the satisfaction of the two generals, the signal of truce. The air-ships stopped over Sydenham and ranged themselves in a circle with their guns pointing down upon the head-quarters, and the *Ariel*, with Tremayne on board, descended to within twenty feet of the ground in front of the hotel.

As she did so an officer wearing the uniform of a French General of Division came forward, saluted, and said that he had a message from the Commander-in-chief of the Federation forces. Tremayne returned the salute and said briefly:

"I am here. What is the message?"

"I am commissioned by General le Gallifet, Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Division, to request on his behalf the honour of an audience. He awaits you with General Cosensz in the hotel," replied the Frenchman, gazing in undisguised admiration at the wonderful craft which he now for the first time saw at close quarters.

"With pleasure. I will be with you in a moment," said Tremayne, and as he spoke, the *Ariel* settled gently down to the earth, and the gangway steps dropped from her side.

As he entered the room in which the two generals were awaiting him, surrounded by their brilliantly-uniformed staffs, he presented a strange contrast to the men whose lives he held in the hollow of his hand. He was dressed in a dark tweed suit, with Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers, met by long shooting boots, just as though he was fresh from the moors, instead of from the battlefield on which the fate of the world was being decided. General le Gallifet advanced to meet him with a puzzled look of half-recognition on his face, which was at once banished by Tremayne holding out his hand without the slightest ceremony, and saying:

"Ah, I see you recognise me, General!"

"I do, my Lord Alanmere, and, you will permit me to add, with the most profound astonishment," replied the

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General, taking the proffered hand with a hearty grasp. "May I venture to hope that with an old acquaintance our negotiations may prove all the easier?"

Tremayne bowed and said:

"Rest assured, General, that they shall be as easy as my instructions will permit me to make them."

"Your instructions! But I thought——"

"That I was in supreme command. So I am in a sense, but I am the lieutenant of Natas for all that, and in a case like this his word is law. But come, what terms do you propose?"

"That truce shall be proclaimed for twenty-four hours; that the commanders of the forces of the League shall meet this mysterious Natas, yourself, and the King of England, and arrange terms by which the armies of France, Russia, and Italy shall be permitted to evacuate the country with the honours of war."

"Then, General, I may as well tell you at once that those terms are impossible," replied the Chief of the Federation quietly, but with a note of inflexible determination in his voice. "In the first place, 'the honours of war' is a phrase which already belongs to the past. We see no honour in war, and if we can have our way this shall be the last war that shall ever be waged on earth.

"Indeed, I may tell you that we began this war as one of absolute extermination. Had it not been for the intercession of Natasha, the daughter of Natas, you would not even have been given the opportunity of making terms of peace, or even of unconditional surrender. Our orders were simply to slay and spare not, as long as a man remained in arms on British soil. You are, of course, aware that we have taken no prisoners——"

"But, my lord, this is not war, it is murder on the most colossal scale!" exclaimed the General, utterly unable to control the agitation that these terrible words evoked, not only in his own breast, but in that of every man who heard them.

"To us war and murder are synonymous terms, differing only as wholesale and retail," replied Tremayne drily; "for the mere names we care nothing. This world war is none of our seeking, but if war can be cured by nothing but war, then we will wage it to the point of extermination. Now here are my terms. All the troops of the League on this side of the River Thames, on laying down their arms, shall be permitted to return to their homes, not as soldiers, but as peaceful citizens of the world, to go about their natural business as men who have sworn never to draw the sword again save in defence of their own homes."

"And his Majesty the Tsar?"

"You cannot make terms for the Tsar, General, and let me beg of you not to attempt to do so. No power under heaven can save him and his advisers from the fate that awaits them."

"And if we refuse your terms, the alternative is what?"

"Annhilation to the last man!"

A dead silence followed these fearful words so calmly and yet so inflexibly spoken. General le Gallifet and the Italian Commander-in-Chief looked at one another and at the officers standing about them. A murmur of horror and indignation passed from lip to lip. Then Tremayne spoke again quickly, but impressively:

"Gentlemen, don't think that I am saying what I cannot do. We are inflexibly determined to stamp the curse of war out here and now, if it costs millions of lives to do so. Your forces are surrounded, your aerostats are captured or destroyed. It is no use mincing matters at a moment like this. It is life or death with you. If you do not believe me, General le Gallifet, come with me and take a flight round London in my air-ship yonder, and your own eyes shall see how hopeless all further struggle is. I pledge my word of honour as an English gentleman that you shall return in safety. Will you come?"

"I will," said the French commander. "Gentlemen, you will await my return," and with a bow to his companions, he followed the Chief out of the room and embarked on the air-ship without further ado.

The *Ariel* at once rose into the air. Tremayne reported to Natas what had been done, and then took the General into the deck saloon and gave orders to proceed at full speed to Richmond, which was reached in what seemed to the Frenchman an inconceivably short space of time. Then the *Ariel* swung round to the eastward, and at half speed traversed the whole line of battle over hill and vale, at an elevation of eight hundred feet, from Richmond to Shooter's Hill.

What General le Gallifet saw more than convinced him that Tremayne had spoken without exaggeration when he said that annihilation was the only alternative to surrender on his terms.

The grey legions of the Federation seemed innumerable. Their long lines lapped round the broken squadrons of the League, mowing them down with incessant hailstorms of magazine fire, and overhead the air-ships and aerostats were hurling shells on them which made great dark gaps in their formations wherever they attempted anything like order. Every position of importance was either occupied or surrounded by the Federationists. There was no way open save towards London, and that way, as the General knew only too well, lay destruction.

To the east of Shooter's Hill the air-ship swerved round to the northward. The Thames was alive with steamers flying the red flag, and carrying food and men into London. To the north of the river the battle had completely ceased as far as Muswell Hill.

There the Black Eagle of Russia still floated from the roof of the Palace, and a furious battle was raging round the slopes of the hill. But the Russians were already surrounded, and manifestly outnumbered five to one, while six aerostats were circling to and fro, doing their work of death upon them with fearful effectiveness.

"You see, General, that the aerostats do not destroy the Palace and bury the Tsar in its ruins, nor do I stop and do the same, as I could do in a few minutes. Do you understand now why you could not make terms for Russia?"

"What your designs are Heaven and yourselves only know," replied the General with quivering lips. "But I see that all is hopelessly lost. For God's sake let this carnage stop! It is not war, it is butchery, and we have deserved this retribution for employing those infernal contrivances in the first place. I always said it was not fair fighting. It is murder to drop death on defenceless men from the clouds. We will accept your terms. Let us get back to the south and save the lives of what remain of our brave fellows. If this is scientific warfare, I for one, will fight no more!"

"Well spoken, General!" said Tremayne, laying his hand upon his shoulder. "Those words of yours have saved two millions of human lives, and by this time to-morrow war will have ceased, I hope for ever, among the nations of the west."

The *Ariel* now swerved southward again, crossed London at full speed, and within half-an-hour General le Gallifet was once more standing in front of the Crystal Palace Hotel.

As it was now getting dusk the search-lights of the air-ships were turned on, and they swept along the southern line of battle flashing the signal, "Victory! Cease firing!" to the triumphant hosts of the Federation, while at the same time the French and Italian commanders set the field telegraph to work and despatched messengers into London with the news of the terms of peace. By nightfall all fighting south of the Thames had ceased, and victors and vanquished were fraternising as though they had never struck a blow at each other, for war is a matter of diplomacy and Court intrigue, and not of

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personal animosity. The peoples of the world would be good enough friends if their rulers and politicians would let them.

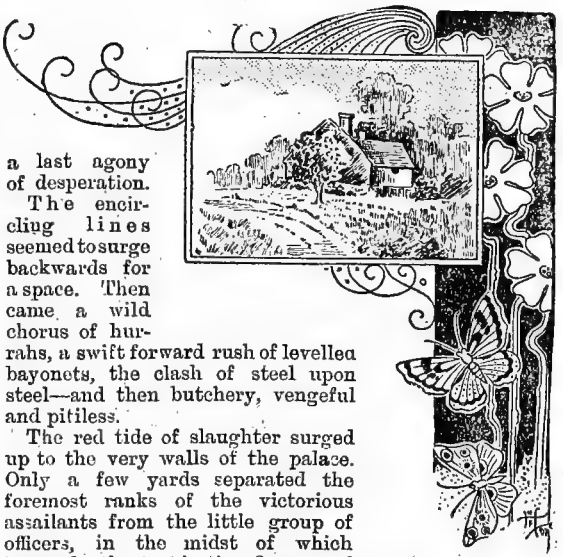
Meanwhile the battle raged with unabated fury round the head-quarters of the Tsar. Here despotism was making its last stand, and making it bravely, in spite of the tremendous odds against it. But as twilight deepened into night the numbers of the assailants of the last of the Russian positions seemed to multiply miraculously.

A never ceasing flood of grey-clad soldiery surged up from the south, overflowed the barricades to the north, and swept the last of the Russians out of the streets like so much chaff. All the hundred streams converged upon Muswell Hill, and joined the ranks of the attacking force, and so the night fell upon the last struggle of the world-war. Even the Tsar himself saw that the gigantic game was virtually over, and that the stake of world-empire had been played for—and lost.

A powerful field search-light had been fixed on the roof of the palace, and, as it flashed hither and thither round the area of the battle, he saw fresh hosts of the British and Federation soldiers pouring in upon the scene of action, while his own men were being mown down by thousands under the concentrated fire of millions of rifles, and his regiments torn to fragments by the incessant storm of explosives from the sky.

Hour after hour the savage fight went on, and the grey and red lines fought their way up and up the slopes, drawing the ring of flame and steel closer and closer round the summit of the hill on which the Autocrat of the North stood waiting for the hour of his fate to strike.

The last line of the defenders of the position was reached at length. For an hour it held firm in spite of the fearful odds. Then it wavered and bent, and swayed to and fro in



a last agony of desperation.

The encircling lines seemed to surge backwards for a space. Then came a wild chorus of hurrahs, a swift forward rush of levelled bayonets, the clash of steel upon steel—and then butchery, vengeful and pitiless.

The red tide of slaughter surged up to the very walls of the palace. Only a few yards separated the foremost ranks of the victorious assailants from the little group of officers, in the midst of which towered the majestic figure of the White Tsar—an Emperor without an empire, a leader without an army. He strode forward towards the line of bayonets fringeing the crest of the hill, drew his sword, snapped the blade as a man would snap a dry stick, and threw the two pieces to the ground, saying in English as he did so:

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"It is enough, I surrender!"

Then he turned on his heel, and with bowed head walked back again to his staff.

Almost at the same moment a blaze of white light appeared in the sky a hundred feet above the heads of the vast throng that encircled the palace. Millions of eyes were turned up at once, and beheld a vision which no one who saw it forgot to the day of his death.

The ten air-ships of the Terrorist fleet were ranged in two curves on either side of the *Ithuriel*, which floated about twenty feet below them, her silvery hull bathed in a flood of light from their electric lamps. In her bow, robed in glistening white fur, stood Natasha, transfigured in the full blaze of the concentrated search-lights. A silence of wonder and expectation fell upon the millions at her feet, and in the midst of it she began to sing the Hymn of Freedom. It was like the voice of an angel singing in the night of peace after strife.

Men of every nation in Europe listened to her, entranced, as she changed from language to language, and when at last the triumphant strains of the old eighteenth century Song of the Revolution, came floating down from her lips through the still night air, an irresistible impulse ran through the listening millions, and with one accord they took up the refrain in all the languages of Europe, and a mighty flood of exultant song rolled up in wave after wave from earth to heaven, a song at once of victory and thanksgiving, for the last battle of the world war had been lost and won, and there was peace on earth at last.

(*To be continued.*)

"Doctor, my wife has insomnia—lies awake most of the night. What shall I do for her?"

"Get home earlier."

Husband: "Woo! Hoo! Great snakes! Why do you set that alarm clock so that it will go off like that?"

Wife: "That is to remind me it's time to wind it up, my dear."

"Of course, Nora, you know that marriage is a very serious thing," said Mrs. Forthingham to her cook, who had told her that she was about to set up housekeeping for herself.

"Yes'm, I know that," replied Nora; "but it isn't half so serious as being single."

Two sisters visiting in Ireland got into conversation with a tenant of their hostess. One of the girls, who is quite stout, asked the old Irish woman if she would have known them for sisters.

"Well," was the answer, with a smile that would have put the blarneystone itself to the blush, "ye look alike; but yer sister's slender, while you, miss—well you favour the Quane."

Courteous Shop Walker: "What can we have the pleasure of showing madam to-day?"

Prospective Customer: "I want something neat but showy, attractive yet modest, of the newest design and yet apparently inexpensive, something which will accentuate my grief and yet not make me look ugly. Do you think you understand?"

C. S. W.: "Perfectly, madam. The Breach of Promise Hat Department is upstairs on the first floor."

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A VILLAGE INDUSTRY.

About three miles from Cambridge is a valuable object lesson to the nation as to how the people may be kept on the land, and be thereby prevented from crowding into already over-populated cities. Twenty-four or twenty-five years ago a farmer turned his attention earnestly to fruit-farming, and made it pay from the outset. A few acres sufficed at first; to-day some thousands of acres are under fruit culture in the little old-world village of Histon and the adjacent district. What was the secret of his great success? It lay mainly in the foresight, skill, energy, and hard work in adapting means to an end.

A market was found for the fruit by the erection of a model factory, remarkable for its equipment, daintiness, and up-to-date methods. The fresh fruit is made into Jam in silver-lined pans *the same day it is picked*, with all the luscious taste of the fruit preserved intact by the addition of sugar. Ripe fruit juices are also employed to impart a delicious and delicate flavour to Chivers' Gold Medal Table Jellies, which is one reason for their great superiority. We have said that the success of this village industry is owing in great measure to the cleanliness and purity of the methods employed in the factory. An Alderman and J.P. writes to the firm: "Doubtless the daily "freshly gathered fruit has given your "firm the high position it enjoys com-"pared with town factories." An M.P. said in a speech in 1894. "I never had "better Strawberry Jam. I am quite "certain that so long as such excellence "is maintained the prosperity of the "firm will continue."

Chivers' Gold Medal Jams and Jellies are sold by Grocers and Stores throughout the United Kingdom. S. Chivers & Sons, Histon, Cambridge.

TOO STOUT

I was for years; by chance I came across a simple home remedy that reduced me from 17st. to 10st. 12lb., and I will willingly send particulars **free** to any sufferer enclosing stamp. Mrs. L. E. FELL, 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

REMNANTS SOILED

5/- Send Postal Order for our Monster Soiled Remnant DRAPERY BUNDLE. Splendid lot for charity purposes or heads of large families. As we are doing this to introduce our Warehouse to you, we can only send one parcel to one address.—ARCADE WAREHOUSE, Dereham Road, Norwich.

A GENUINE AND TRUE CURE.

For Stamps or Postal Order for 1/1½, a sample packet of **12 CURATIVE POWDERS for INDIGESTION** will be sent free. These powders are quite tasteless, small, and easy to take, and an **ABSOLUTE** and **SAFE CURE**. They are carefully prepared by **fully qualified Chemists**, and are made from the prescription of a **well-known medical man**, given to a great sufferer, and who is now quite free. The most stubborn cases have been relieved, and **being genuine**, the powders will cure those who are suffering to-day. Send to Wholesale Agent, **D. JAMIESON**, Tower Chambers, **Liverpool**, and mention this paper.

VARICOCELE.

Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free, three stamps.

S. S. MURRAY,
7, Southampton Row, London, W.C.

NOSE MACHINES.

LEES RAY, S. S. Dept., South Castle St., Liverpool, is a specialist on Ugly and Red Noses. Send stamp for particulars of his patent scientific Nose Improvers. Red Nose Cure, medically approved, 3/9. Ray's Obesity Pills, 2/6.

A SUM
OF
from 12s. to 25s. per week.

can be earned in spare hours or evenings by either sex everywhere. Send addressed envelope for particulars to Box 24, Eclipse Works, 89 Aldersgate Street, London.

THE JOHN NOBLE 10/6 COSTUMES

THE LATEST SUCCESS IS MODEL 1500.

A WONDERFUL COSTUME for the price, **10/6.**
Well cut!
Well made!!
Well finished!!!

The Coat has the Latest shaped American collar, tight fitting back, and loose front, fastening with barrel buttons, but may be worn open or closed. Skirt the latest full shape. Price complete, only **10/6**; carriage 6d. Skirt alone, **5/6**; carriage 5d.

Sizes in Stock are 34, 36, 38 ins. round bust under arms. Waists 24, 26, 28 ins.; Skirts being 38, 40, 42 ins. long in front. Larger or Special Sizes made to measure, 1/6 ex.

FREE.
A Rich Silk Scarf, with every Lady's Costume during the Sale.

Are the Finest Value in the World, and are promptly sent by Parcel Post direct from the Largest Firm of Costume Manufacturers in the World.

They are made in two most durable fabrics: **THE JOHN NOBLE CHEVIOT SERGE** and **THE JOHN NOBLE COSTUME COATING**, **PATTERNS** of which are sent **POST FREE.** COLOURS: Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Fawn, Grey, and Royal Blue.

FULL DRESS LENGTH of either Cloth (9yds.—52 ins. wide) for **7/6**; carriage 8d.

FREE GIFTS
are being presented during
THE SALE
(NOW ON),
and the Sale List, containing full descriptions and illustrations of these and BARGAINS in all departments, will be sent Post Free to any address.

PRETTY "PUSSY" CALENDAR presented to all purchasers naming "SHORT STORIES."

JOHN NOBLE LTD., BROOK STREET MILLS, **MANCHESTER.**

DRUNKENNESS

CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

HAIR DESTROYED.

Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair **free of charge.** (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

Don't Cough - use
They at once check the Cough and remove the cause.
The Unrivalled
One Lozenge alone relieves.
Sold everywhere, Tins 13½d. each.
Keatings Lozenges

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.
EPPS'S
GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.
COCOA
BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

WHY BE FAT?

When a lady, who has discovered a simple means of Self-Cure will be happy to send particulars of same to any sufferer from this distressing complaint. Free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. ADDRESS:
Mrs. TREVOR WELLS,
63 *HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.*

VARICOCELE.

Men who are weak and suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced. Particulars and proofs of successful cures sent free on receipt of address.

THE COLLINS REMEDY CO.,
Gothic House, 9 Erskine Street, Liverpool.

ESTABLISHED 1851.
BIRKBECK BANK
Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.
INVESTED FUNDS £10,000,000.
The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.
FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

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The Brain Gymnasium.

On this page, under the title, "The Brain Gymnasium," appear each week a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors, with interest and profit to themselves, during the long winter evenings. Many of the tasks set will be comparatively easy of solution, while others will be designed with a view to taxing the abilities of the most proficient in this direction.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the sender of the greatest number of correct solutions, and to the senders of the ten next highest number of correct ones will be presented either one of our silver-plated pencil cases or a copy of a popular six-shilling novel. Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, February 12th, 1900.

No. 34.

Form a word square from the equivalents of "not distant," "not employed," "to unite," "to take notice."

No. 35.

One-third of Thames, one-sixth of London, two-fifths of Wales, and one-fourth of York, form an English river. What is it?

No. 36.

The following are "pied proverbs," each group of letters making one word. Rearrange so that the proverbs may be read.

1. Glenarin si rebtet ntha sheosu, lsadn ro ymeon.
2. Os goln sa yuo ear itgnnaor eb ton adsehma ot nlera.
3. Diseslen si eth tpnaer fo eivc dan ymreis.
4. A dogo dwro rof a dab oen si thowr humc, dan sctos etitll.
5. Ilo adn htrut lwli tge utpspoemr ta tsla.
6. A oogd eman wlil enisb fro evre.
7. A dab dwonu shlea; a bda eman skill.
8. Rbeett ot eb aelno ntah ni dba pocmyna.
9. Gdnoi ngonith si iondg lli.
10. Ysa wlle si dgoo, tub od lwle si rebett.

No. 37.

Using but five different letters, form the name of a native. By transposing two letters for two others, the same name can be read backwards.

No. 38.

I am the title of a well-known book. Divide me into four parts. My first consists of countless grains, my second is a crossing, the last and greater portion of my first forms my third, while my fourth, if rearranged, signifies a counsellor.

No. 39.

An Enigma.

While I, 6, 7, 8, my miserable dinner, 6, 7, the old hotel, I saw a 5, 6, 7, run over the floor, and presently a man came in and showed us a box which he said contained an 1, 2, 3. He wanted to let it out, but we were afraid to have it done. When I went to the landlord to pay my bill, I found the old 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, had charged me enormous 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and I refused to pay the full amount. He became quite 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and, though I could not understand a word he said, he hissed me out. So I came away and left him practising his 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. What were they?

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" half	6 5 0

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Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, Feb. **13th**, if intended for the issue on sale Feb. **27th**, and dated March **3rd**. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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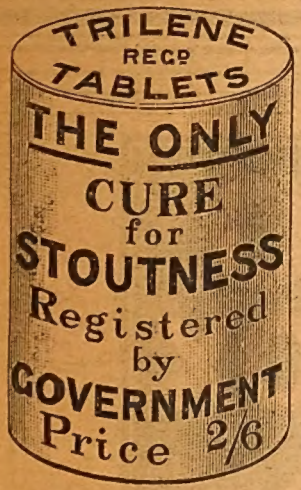
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

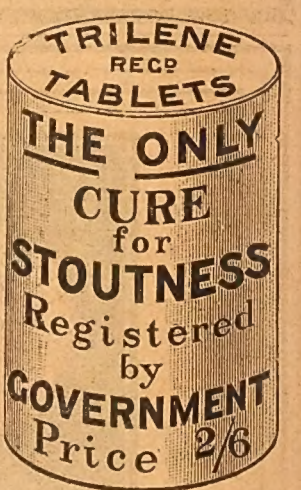
TRILENE TABLETS Regd



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

'Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

MRS. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

MISS NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 13st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if the had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton-Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

MRS E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver nr Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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HOW DO YOU SPELL

VELVETEEN?

FIVE LETTERS ONLY.

Don't Forget this when you buy.

EVERY YARD IS STAMPED

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OROCO Sox

A New Invention to keep the feet warm and dry yet allowing perfect ventilation

18 pairs post free for 1/-

State size required.

A boon for tender & tired feet

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WIGAN.

WILL SUIT YOU DOWN TO THE GROUND.

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